
A MESSAGE TO THE ENLIGHTENED THINKERS "SURAH AL RUM - THE ROMANS"

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(1933-1977)



In the name of Allah, the God of Muhammad, the last Messenger of awareness, ability and liberty; God of Imam Ali, the example of a true Muslim, the victim of oppression, the leader of mankind;

In the name of Allah, the creator of the house of Fatimah in whom one's hopes for freedom are placed, that small house which is as large as the universe ...

In the Name of Allah, the God of Abudhar, the example of the *mustadafin*, the oppressed people of the past and the present; the God of those who throughout history have suffered and experienced torture and of those who today continue to endure pain until the reappearance of the twelfth Imam Allah of those who have been deprived of worldly possessions throughout history. Although poor, they always followed the path of Ibrahim and inherited the quality of fighting to achieve freedom from the time of Adam to that of Husayn, and from the latter to eternity they will continue to struggle to save humanity;

In the Name of Allah, the God of the martyrs (*shuhada*) who gave their lives for the cause of truth and justice.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

While waiting for the program to commence, I listened to the splendid presentation by the young man It prompted me to think about Ali's character and how enlightening it is to love him. Therein may lie the answer! If only a spark-emitting understanding of Ali's character can be ignited in this corrupt environment which has caused the deterioration of our generation, and if that spark can be caught by the hearts of our youth, the darkness of the lagoon will be overcome by love. Such an approach may yield freedom and understanding.

Throughout the world, plots have been devised to preoccupy and destroy the young generation. Instead of being presented with the genuine justice and freedom that they need and expect, our youth are given "the freedom of sex." All areas of communication (radio, television, the press, art, etc.) are attempting to satisfy "sexual needs." On the other hand, if we would expose our youth to "Ali's school" and endow them with a flame of the everlasting fire from the quiet and abandoned house of Fatimah, we could ignite fire in them. Furthermore, our stagnating, silent and divided society would be confronted with a new ray of hope, energy,

movement and aim. A bright and conscious generation could then be raised according to those principles practiced by Ali and left behind for mankind through his patience, silence, pains, and struggles.

I hope soon to see the day when the present state of affairs, which is coloured by pessimism, cursing and evil-teaching perpetuated among Muslims by the enemies of Islam in order to instigate trouble between them so that they can forget the real enemy, will be transformed. Instead of wasting their energy on differences as well as accusing, cursing, humiliating, rejecting and condemning one another, all Muslims should follow the true Islamic teachings and enjoy friendship and understanding. I hope this day is not too far away! It will be a day when our modern university students along with those of the religious schools, *hawzat*, our professors along with the 'ulama, our illiterate believers along with the intellectuals, our youth along with the elderly, our modernized along with the traditionalists, our daughters along with their mothers, our sons along with their fathers will all be able to sit together and defend each other in a united struggle against the plots facing Muslims. It will also be the day when Muslims enhance their knowledge of true Islam. Let us pray to witness such a day soon. In this presentation, I will attempt to delineate a common goal and strategy which should be adopted by Muslims throughout the world. It is based on the only scripture available to Muslims, the Glorious Qur'an, whose teachings are capable of transcending all sects, divisions, and scattered factions of Muslims and simultaneously is capable of producing the re-union of Muslims and a revival of Islamic brotherhood.

To date, the Qur'an is the only document that has been safe from (major or minor) changes or distortions by the enemies of Islam. Although the internal and external enemies, which included the ruthless superpowers, the caliphs, the kings and the evil 'ulama did everything in their power to counteract or destroy the Qur'an, their attempts failed. Their fear of the Qur'an persisted until they resorted to distorting the interpretation of the Qur'an for the Muslims. Furthermore, the enemies of Islam have tried to remove the Qur'an as a frame of reference from the Muslim's way of life and pattern of thinking (even for the theology students). For those who were steadfast in their interest in the Qur'an, the enemies wholeheartedly sought to attract attention to the beauty of the cover, print or proper recitation of the Qur'an, but not to its contents.

Regardless of past plots to undermine the Qur'an or the endurance of the differences among Muslims, all Muslims of the world, old or young, illiterate or literate, Shi'i or Sunni, Eastern or Western and from every cultural background, all firmly agree that the Qur'an is the foundation of Islam. And, in spite of centuries of efforts to prevent the Qur'an from being exposed and considered, the holy book has survived and remained uncorrupted. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the conscientious Muslims to focus on reintroducing the Qur'an to the Muslim society. Where should they begin? It is highly recommended that concerned Muslims, wherever they may be, meet in a nearby mosque, a Husayniyah, any religious, scientific or cultural centre, a city or village, an office, or even a factory, in order to establish a centre for Qur'anic studies. In initiating such a project, any level of classes may be established. The ultimate goal will be to have the mosques, Husayniyah and religious gatherings concentrate on the contents of the Qur'an. However, for a better understanding of the Qur'an, attention to the traditions and history of the Prophet and his righteous followers must accompany Qur'anic study. The holy Qur'an should always remain with Muslims to the degree that its light may pulsate and enlighten the heart. Under such circumstances, sects and differences will disappear, and unity will emerge under the shade of the Qur'an. In the final analysis, the language and arbitration of the Qur'an will cause pessimism and misunderstanding to be replaced by optimism and understanding.

Because of the occasion (the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Ali), it would be most appropriate to talk about the morals and characteristics of Imam Ali. However, as a substitute, I have decided to select a part of the Qur'anic text for discussion. My intention is not to claim that I am a qualified exegete of the Qur'an nor that I am very knowledgeable of its contents, but rather to present an example and evidence supporting the contention of those who believe that the Qur'an is alive. Such an assertion is not due to prejudice on the part of the believers but results from what is clear and observable to every Muslim or non-Muslim who is fair, conscientious and open-minded.

A study of Surah XXX of the Qur'an, al-Rum, will be made. This surah could have been revealed just today to the Muslims, so precisely does it reflect their present conditions. Furthermore, it is an unusual motivating and living message to all contemporary, responsible individuals, especially those enlightened Muslims who energetically and persistently struggle to bring knowledge and awareness to the afflicted members of their society; and regardless of frustrations and oppositions, responsible Muslims remain firm in their efforts to overcome oppression.

As already mentioned, this surah is an example used to confirm the fact that the Qur'an is always living while other things are changing. For example, some beings die while some others are born. Moreover even man's pains, needs, thoughts and fate in societies are constantly transformed. Nevertheless, the Qur'an, the word of Allah, remains constant throughout all reforms and evolutions. It is applicable to all times and places; irrespective of political, cultural, and social class the Qur'an will lead to the freedom of every conscious individual. Lastly, before pursuing the commentary on the Surah al-Rum, I wish to take this opportunity to apologize for introducing a surah of the Qur'an in the form of a lesson instead of the detailed and interpretive fashion which is the traditional practice in religious gatherings. because of time constraints, the complete text of the surah will not be discussed. Emphasis will be placed mainly on those ayat that relate to the central message of the surah. The audience is urged to study, at its convenience and with the assistance of available interpretations, the whole surah. Through undivided attention and concentration, the great meaning of the surah will be discovered. Only then will the call "to return to the Glorious Qur'an" be understood. If responsible enlightened souls in Muslim societies who are searching for a method, an ideology and a solution to the problems of their nation would return to the greatest book, they would learn the best lessons from it. They would actually feel the uniqueness and wondrous nature of the Qur'an and its teachings:

In the name of Allah, the merciful, the beneficent. Alif, Lam, Mim. The Byzantines (Romans) have been defeated in the nearer land, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within ten years, Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter and on that day believers will rejoice. (XXX :1-4).

These ayat are the core and the essence of the surah. The Qur'an makes a prediction of which no one is aware. It gives an accurate description of when "something" will happen. What, when and where will it be? As revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, the ayat state that the Byzantines will be victorious ten years after their defeat in the nearer land. Remember, such a prediction was not the Prophet's personal opinion; if he doubted the genuineness of the prediction, he would never have mentioned it. Consider the fact that the Prophet Muhammad did not say that the event would occur in the "near future" so that it could be interpreted as the next thirty or even hundred years (even though this is also less than a wink in comparison to the length of history). Without ambiguity, he defined the period after defeat and before victory within the range of ten years.

History attests to the validity of the prediction made in the surah. Like others throughout the Qur'an, the statement causes one to believe in pure miracles which are beyond human comprehension. Certain concepts may appear illogical, but when a phenomenon is revealed throughout the Qur'an and repeated by the Prophet, people begin to believe and admit that the Qur'an and prophet Muhammad are unique sources of knowledge.

To achieve recognition by the ordinary people, the prophets had to perform miracles, especially physical ones like those rendered by Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and all other prophets. The ability to perform miracles persuaded the illiterate people that the knowledge and power of these prophets originated from a source beyond physical reality (i.e., the unseen). An illiterate person was one who expected the Prophet to change a pebble into gold before he could believe in his prophethood. In contrast, the conscious person who commanded awareness accepted the prophets not as a result of their miracles, but rather because of the essence of their message.

An insightful believer knows the value of the Qur'an by its meaning, rhythm, phonetics and harmony of words, which are rare and very different from words used by mankind. Even without predictions or miracles, a literate and conscious individual realizes the uniqueness of the Qur'an. Consequently, the Qur'an is the greatest miracle of the Prophet Muhammad. It was sent for the time of the Prophet as well as future times when man would reach a much higher level of awareness, comprehension and logic, when he would readily acknowledge the Qur'an as the word of Allah and recognize it as the best proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad.

The early Muslims (Ali, Abudhar, 'Ammar, Salman, etc.) never demanded any miracle from the Prophet. As soon as the Prophet spoke, they recognized the merit of his message. For instance, upon returning from the desert and meeting the Prophet, Abudhar asked him about his prophethood and message. The simple reply of the Prophet convinced Abudhar that he was "the one that the living souls were awaiting." Motivated by faith and sincerity, Abudhar spent his wealth and life to support and disseminate the Prophet's message. Likewise, when at the age of eight Imam Ali (who was living with the Prophet because of his family's misfortune) saw the Prophet and his wife Khadijah praying and prostrating, he inquired about their behaviour. Once again, the Prophet provided a simple response by stating that he had been chosen by Allah to address the people and make them aware of two essential principles. They were, firstly, that Allah is one and the only truth while all other gods were false, and secondly, that Muhammad was his messenger. Ali reacted strangely; he told the Prophet that he wished to consult his father. The Prophet agreed that Ali should do so. Following the dialogue, Ali immediately went to his room. He was awake all night pondering over the invitation and the message the Prophet referred to. The next morning, before leaving the Prophet's home or any consultation with his father, Ali met with the Prophet and requested to be introduced to Islam. Ali explained how he had carefully thought about their discussion and concluded that since Allah did not consult Abu Talib, Ali's father, before creating him, so it was not necessary to seek his father's permission to worship Allah. Ali repeated his request that the Prophet introduce him to Islam. The Prophet fulfilled Ali's wish. Shaking the Prophet's hand, Ali pledged allegiance. The famous historian Thomas Carlyle comments: "When this small hand was placed in the strong hand of the Prophet, the path of history changed." This was how the conscious people believed: they did not expect to witness physical miracles.

And now, back to Surah al-Rum. Those who were cognizant of the surah were fascinated by its prediction, which later materialized. The defeat of the Byzantine Empire and its victory ten years later was a miracle which attested to the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad and the fact that the Qur'an was in fact Allah's word. However, does the Surah mean only to predict the

future? Does it talk only about something which occurred once as a miracle and is no longer significant? Is there no other underlying message in the ayat for those who are confronted with today's corrupt conditions and who, out of a sense of responsibility toward the future, try to identify their problems? Is there no other message for those enlightened souls who feel obligated to find an ideology, a communication or a way to fulfil their promises and duties toward mankind?

Can it be that the Qur'an is only a Holy Book whose predictions have been proven valid with time? Certainly not. Behind the great miracle lies a great message. It may be compared to the sunrise. When watched daily, the sunrise appears the same but, in reality, it crosses over the changes of civilizations, systems and generations. Emitting life, warmth and knowledge, the sunrise appears as if it lasts forever. Mankind needs the Qur'an as it needs sunshine, irrespective of the era in history, genealogical considerations or cultural, agricultural, economic and political conditions. Furthermore, the Qur'an should not be compared with the words of an author, a poet, a philosopher or a sociologist. The following discussion of Byzantium will show how the Qur'an is still very much alive. Hypothetically speaking, if today there were a prophet delegated to receive a new revelation for the Muslims, without any doubt it would be again the Surah al-Ram.

For clarifying the meaning of the Surah and the occasion when it was revealed a review of the relevant geography and history is warranted. Although the geography of the region has been altered, a look at any contemporary map of the Fertile Crescent will be of help. The regions to note are the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the cities of Mecca and Medina, and the regions of the ancient Persian and Byzantine empires. In terms of the position of the Prophet in the scenario, he was born during 571 CE and became a prophet at the age of forty; the peak of his prophethood occurred around 622 CE. What was the world's situation as well as the Prophet's position in 622 CE? The surah was revealed in Mecca before the Prophet migrated to Medina. At that time, the number of the Prophet's companions and followers and Muslims was minimal. Except for a few, they were all very poor and suffered torture at the hands of the non-believers. Most of the early Muslims were homeless foreigners and were alienated from the rich families and rulers of Mecca. Deprived of tribal relations, capital and the pride of wealth, they were a group of weak, unarmed and impoverished people whose faces reflected pain and suffering. Moreover, the early Muslims such as 'Ammar, Yasir and Sumayyah were exploited by the existing masters, criminals, and landowners of Ta'if as well as the Quraysh caravan owners.

A black Abyssinian female slave from Mecca, Sumayyah was married to Yasir, a poor Arab who immigrated to Mecca from the desert of Yemen. Prior to his marriage, Yasir had been a poverty-stricken, homeless, and lonely man. Upon finding a job as a servant in Mecca, Yasir had asked Sumayyah to marry him and she had accepted. 'Ammar was the first product of their marriage. The family's racial ties and social class were quite obvious. Nevertheless, the three of them were among those who demonstrated interest in Islam during the first year of its proclamation. As a result, they were surely the best candidates to be tortured by their masters (the Quraysh) in order to serve as a warning to other people, lest they do the same. Everyday, Abu-Jahl, a prominent member of the ruling Meccans, took the couple and their son to the hot desert on the outskirts of Mecca where he would torture them under the burning sun until the day ended. During each torture session, Abu Jahl introduced a new torture device. His goal was to make them curse the Prophet, but Yasir, Sumayyah and 'Ammar resisted in spite of the severe torment. Abu Jahl declared he would cease the torture only if the family rejected the Prophet and his message. To show their sincerity towards the Prophet and their ardent belief in Islam, the victims patiently tolerated the torture. Poor and helpless, the Prophet was unable to protect his followers from the wrath of Abu Jahl. Although the Prophet was a member of a powerful family,

he was all alone and without any means of defence. To alleviate the misery of Yasir, Sumayyah and 'Ammar, the Prophet could only go to the torture site, watch the family being tortured, and offer moral support and sympathy.

Since conventionally one thinks of "men of the sword" as merciless and insensitive, it may be difficult to imagine how the courageous and powerful Prophet could possess such a high degree of affection and sympathy, a quality that even Jesus did not have, and which was manifested throughout the ordeal. The Prophet of Islam was the only one who simultaneously carried the sword of Caesar in his hand, and the heart of Jesus in his chest. A sensitive person, he was forced to witness the best models of love and faith subjected to the torture hands of Abu Jahl and his associates. Unfortunately, the Prophet could not protest such actions nor initiate measures to curtail them. Every day as he stood by the victims, he observed the sadistic reactions of those who inflicted the torture. As if drunk with their performance, the torturers happily encouraged each other to more extreme torture of the followers of the Prophet. As already noted the Prophet was there but could only give the victims moral support during such a situation of weakness, desperation and universal ignorance. Praying that Allah's help and victory should soon arrive, the Prophet encouraged the victims to be patient and steadfast in their resistance. Day after day, the Prophet of Islam watched the old and faithful black woman, Sumayyah, the old, poor, loving, faithful and courageous man, Yasir, and last but not least, the growing young man who was totally overcome by the love for his Prophet, 'Ammar. Although continuously tortured, these victims were the bleeding symbols of uprightness and righteousness. Whenever they noticed the Prophet's arrival, the victims tried to conceal their pains and desperation and would project an image of strength, self-control, happiness and dedication to and love for the Prophet. After sharing his sorrow with those being tortured, the Prophet would depart.

Day after day this event was repeated, until one day the Prophet came but saw neither Sumayyah, nor Yasir, nor the torturers the shouts of Abu Jahl and Umayyat Ibn Khalaf (Abu-Jahl's associate) no longer filled the air. Amidst the vacant and silent valley of Mecca the Prophet saw 'Ammar who possessed the sincerity of an Abyssinian, the emotions of an Arab and the awareness of a Muslim standing all alone. Unlike in the past, 'Ammar's arms and legs were not tied. Nobody was watching him; 'Ammar was actually free. Why was he still at the site? As the Prophet approached 'Ammar, he noticed 'Ammar was in an unusual position, one which he never assumed even under severe torture. Bowing his head over his chest 'Ammar tried to conceal his face from the Prophet. In light of 'Ammar's previous demonstration of strength, the prophet was surprised to see him in a state of weakness. The Prophet tried to hold 'Ammar's head in an upright position by grabbing his curly hair. He asked 'Ammar to look at him. He repeated his request, but then he noticed tears falling from 'Ammar's face as 'Ammar tried even harder to conceal his face. The Prophet realized 'Ammar must have experienced the severest torture; he concluded that 'Ammar must have witnessed the torture and death of his parents.

Although the bodies had been removed, 'Ammar remained. Why didn't 'Ammar want to return to the city? As 'Ammar cried, the Prophet tried to calm him and eulogized his parents. Surprisingly 'Ammar was not concerned with the destiny of his parents. He was suffering a more severe pain. 'Ammar said: "O messenger of Allah, I finally said what I have always been loath to say." It was evident to the Prophet that 'Ammar had lost consciousness after watching his parents tortured to death. Like any other human being, 'Ammar had feelings and emotions which limited his capacity for resistance. Consequently, when 'Ammar lost consciousness, he pleased Abu Jahl but displeased himself by rejecting the Prophet. In return, 'Ammar was freed. As he regained consciousness, the pains of torture subsided and the shouts of Abu Jahl as well as his associates were no longer heard. Upon achieving total consciousness, 'Ammar wondered why he had been

freed. He quickly realized that he had succumbed to the enemies of Islam, and could not tolerate the torture of his shame which was much more painful than Abu Jahl's torture. 'Ammar's state of mind caused him to forget about the death of his parents. He was preoccupied with the anxieties of his return home and facing the Prophet. Standing alone in the desert, 'Ammar experienced sadness, homelessness, and helplessness. Sympathetically, the Prophet addressed 'Ammar and said: "'Ammar, do not worry if you said something you did not believe, because Allah is forgiving."

'Ammar was relieved. 'Ammar went on to lead his life, which included thirteen years before Hijra and forty years afterwards, in defence of Islam. Throughout the life of the Prophet until the time of 'Uthman (the third Caliph), 'Ammar participated in numerous battles. Despite his old age and diminished combat abilities, 'Ammar remained dedicated to the cause of Islam. Forty-three years after being exonerated for making a statement he did not believe in (i.e., rejecting the Prophet), and although aged and weak, 'Ammar was making up for it. He participated in the battle of Siffayn. He remembered what the Prophet had told him: "'Ammar, you will be killed by a group of oppressors." (Many people had witnessed the Prophet uttering this statement). Anxious to do his best and aware of his inability to fight holding a sword alongside Ali, 'Ammar decided to fight bare-handed. He felt that if he were killed by Mu'awiyah's army, the truth would be revealed and people would identify the oppressors. Mu'awiyah's army was eager to see 'Ammar dead, but many were aware of the Prophet's statement and therefore kept away from 'Ammar. Nevertheless, 'Ammar wholeheartedly sought to reach the forefront of the battle and finally did. When he died, the followers of Mu'awiyah not only cried that 'Ammar was killed but also recalled what the Prophet had said regarding 'Ammar's death. The members of Mu'awiyah's army began to argue and became hesitant, which strengthened the convictions of Ali's followers. This account shows that 'Ammar died in a manner reserved exclusively to him.

Another victim of torture, inflicted by Umayyat Ibn Khalaf, was a slave called Bilal. Everyday at a site near Mecca, a barrel of water was heated under the burning desert sun. The torturer would then submerge Bilal's head under the water almost to the point of suffocation. Whenever the torturer released his hand, Bilal would grasp his breath and say "Ahad" (Allah is One). Regardless of the continuous torment, Bilal repeated "Ahad, Ahad." Later, when he became semi-conscious and was about to die, Bilal was left exposed to the whims of ignorant people and children. Without mercy, they teased him, cursed him, spat on his face and dragged his body on the ground. Bilal's responses of "Ahad, Ahad," did not go unheeded. Because of its significance, "Ahad" became a slogan which Muslims repeated during their battles when they were at the peak of victory. It is the exclusive legacy of Bilal.

These stories illustrate the status of the early Muslims in Mecca and the strength of those who supported the poor and lonely Prophet, a man deprived of the rights of an ordinary Arab in Mecca. He could not even pray at Masjid al-Haram, which was open to everyone. Subject to all forms of harassment by non-believers, the Prophet was cursed, stoned, showered with the contents of the stomach of a lamb (on his head) and attacked with ashes as he went to the mosque. During such a difficult situation only a small group of poor, lonely and homeless individuals stood behind the Prophet. In this atmosphere of weakness, desperation and helplessness, the Prophet informed his companions: "You will be the victors of history. Neither the superpowers, the great kingdoms nor the great Caesar, but Muslims, will dominate the world. Not only will you rule Arabia, Mecca or the Quraysh, but you will also conquer Persia, Byzantium, Yemen and Egypt (i.e., the contemporary East and the West)." Those were the words of a lonely leader whose followers had either died helplessly under torture or emigrated to Abyssinia to escape Quraysh oppression. Not only did the leader of the small and weak group of

supporters speak with strong determination, but he also informed his followers that they would rule the world.

The Prophet assured them that although the intellectuals of his time would ridicule them, the Muslims would eventually control the great civilizations of the East and the West. Who were the intellectuals of the Prophet's time? They included wealthy businessmen who were the farm-owners of Ta'if, or importers of goods from Iran, Byzantium, Yemen, and Syria (Sham), those who were exposed to other religions or had accepted other faiths, and finally, those who had become familiar with foreign countries and foreign relations through commercial dealings with Persia. Claiming that the Qur'an was nothing more than a collection of old stories for which they had better substitutes, they would go to the Masjid al-Haram, and relay the stories of Rustam, Esfandiar, and Ashkabus to the Arab audience. Through such entertainment, the intellectuals would preoccupy the people so as to stop them from thinking about the Prophet's message.

In contrast to the "intellectuals," who knew about the world and the universe, the Prophet was a lay person. With the exception of a few times when he visited the neighbouring areas, he rarely had gone beyond the vicinity of Mecca. The Prophet had neither seen nor studied other holy books. He was not familiar with other existing civilizations, empires, faiths, and politicians. Furthermore, not knowing their armies or the type of weapons they used, the Prophet did not estimate the capabilities of the great powers. The companions of the Prophet were in a worse condition. They lacked not only social and cultural class but also scientific qualifications and distinction. The intellectuals singled out the son of Abdullah and the poor people around him (i.e., his companions). They asked if the Prophet was deceiving his followers or fooling himself. Was he assuring the companions that if they strived hard and believed in Allah, they would rule the world? According to the intellectuals, because the Prophet did not know the geography of the world, he thought the world was limited to Mecca, Medina and the few Arab tribes. They also claimed that the Prophet was not aware of the fact that the Arab legion of the Byzantine army numbered almost one hundred thousand, and were equipped with the best weapons. This was only their northern division. Their southern one had an equal number of armed cavaliers. If both squadrons were called to a battle, two hundred thousand soldiers would quickly appear, armed with sophisticated weapons. As for the Persians, they had commissioned seven hundred thousand soldiers to Greece, and had five hundred thousand soldiers in their northern army and three hundred thousand well-equipped soldiers based in Isfahan. Each horse in the Persian army had a saddle and ornaments which were more expensive than the total cost of the Arab army's weapons. Yet, although unfamiliar with contemporary international affairs, the Prophet told Bilal, Khubab, 'Ammar, Sumayyah, Salman and others that if they worked hard and lived a righteous life, their generation would rule the world.

The Prophet did not know that all of Arabia and the Arab tribes (not in Mecca and Medina) plus Yemen were not valuable enough for the Persians or Byzantines to conquer. This position implied that the Arabs were not even worthy of being slaves or of being colonized by the Empires. The Persians invaded Greece and Egypt. (To reach Egypt, the Persians had to encircle the Arabian Peninsula). They conquered Egypt. Considering that today's Iraq, the Red Sea, Turkey and Greece were all parts of the Byzantine Empire, when the Prophet declared his message in the seventh century the entire known world was divided between the Persian and Eastern Roman empires, which were both civilized and heavily armed. All the world's wealth belonged to the two powers. It was in Constantinople or Ctesiphon, the capital of Byzantium and of the Sassanids respectively, that the fate and future of all races, nations and civilizations were decided and planned. If there were lands or nations which were not ruled by the Byzantines or the Persians, it was not because they were strong and independent, but because they were not

important to either power from a historical, political or economic point of view. In other words, it was not worth the superpowers' time and effort to conquer such areas.

During the seventh century, Mecca was midway between the world's two most powerful civilizations, ideologies, philosophies, social systems, public relations systems, military structures, and civil systems. The most sophisticated and modern weapons of the day were in the possession of the Persians and the Byzantines. Persia occupied most of the East while the Byzantines had most of the West. Mecca and Medina were two small villages that neither the Byzantines nor the Persians bothered to capture. The Byzantines were not interested in experiencing the hardships of crossing the northern desert to reach Medina. Likewise, the Persians did not want to cross Rab'-al-Khali and the hot desert of Najd in order to capture Mecca. After all, what was in Mecca? It housed a simple temple (Ka'bah), its inhabitants were groups of caravan owners or herders, and it lacked fertility and vegetation. What was in Medina, save a few palm trees, two major tribes of Aws and Khazraj and tribesmen engaged in agricultural projects, and some Jewish families carrying on their usual practices of shopkeeping and business. One might wonder which era is being described, today's world situation or the seventh century.

The Prophet resided in Mecca, a small village whose main attraction was the temple even though it was becoming a city because it was on the caravan route. The "Silk Road" was one of the most important economic lines that extended from China to Rome: it passed through Persia and crossed northern Arabia (Turkey today). However, because of the war between the Persians and the Byzantines, traders had to avoid the "Silk Road" and use the desert route in their effort to carry Chinese and Persian goods to Europe. The desert was an uninhabitable hot place where nothing grew. While its stones were granite, the sand hills and pebbles were formed and reformed by the winds. Since camels were the only means of getting across, businessmen negotiated deals with the camel owners or Arab caravan men whereby goods would be taken across the desert. (Mecca and Medina are located on the western side of the desert).

Historians incorrectly refer to the "Quraysh aristocracy" and claim that there were many aristocrats in Mecca. They probably do not realize that Mecca was little more than a temple. How much was the property of Abu-Sufyan worth? What was the criteria for being a member of the aristocracy those days? Those who owned a few camels or acted as brokers were most likely considered aristocrats. Interestingly enough, if one examines the seventh century of Persian or Roman books, one will rarely find the word "Arab" or "Arabia Felix." Only in some Greek books does one find these terms. And even these are references to Yemen, which was mentioned because of its fertility and its significance as the bone of contention between Persia and Abyssinia.

It was in this area, to which the Persians and Byzantines attached so little import and which was deemed unworthy of conquest, that the Prophet was born, received the revelations, proclaimed the message and initiated the Islamic revolution. In light of the circumstances, it would not have been abnormal to expect that such a movement, like a desert storm, would be short-lived and would soon disappear. The world beyond Mecca could not hear about the movement since it had no access to that area. It seemed that the power of the movement could hardly extend beyond Mecca. At most the threat of the revolution went as far as Mecca itself, where the Prophet and his companions might gain ascendancy. So what? What would happen if they did?

During the desperate conditions in which a group of poor, exploited, illiterate, homeless, alienated, tortured and helpless people could do nothing to stop the torturers from tormenting

them or their friends, the Prophet of Islam tried to comfort them. He assured his followers that if they believed in Islam, they would rule the world. The so-called intellectuals ridiculed the Prophet's prediction. They raised doubts. Do these people know anything about the world? Do they know what power means? Do they know who has the greatest amount of weapons? Do they know who alone is able to defeat the Romans?

They answered that it could only be the Persians who were capable of defeating the Byzantines. For over eleven hundred years (i.e., 550 BC to 622 CE) the Persians and the Romans controlled the world and fought one another. The Arabs are hardly mentioned in the history of that era. They became visible as a result of some trade activity via the bypass road when a few camel owners and Arab caravan men encountered some business dealings. At that time a homeless man who lived in his uncle's house, unable to defend himself from even the camel owners, experienced numerous hardships throughout his life and married the woman he worked for, and who was much older than himself, when he decided to establish a family. It was this man who claimed that the Muslims would conquer the entire world. The surah confirms his utterance, "Alif-Lam-Mim, The Romans were defeated" (XXX : 1-2). Even with this geographical and historical clarification, it is still unclear as to whether what is being discussed appertains to the contemporary world situation or the situation of fourteen hundred years ago. Conditions today are very similar. In fact not even the terminology has changed. The same polarization exists, while the geographical positions have undergone minor transformations. The Muslims are in the same, if not a worse, predicament. East and West rule the world while the Muslims, who are in the middle, are considered part of the Third World. Unfortunately, many intellectuals who have been overcome by the present superpowers believe that the survival of the Third World nations depends on their allegiance to one of these powers. Of course, such a position is contrary to the Islamic belief that Allah is the Almighty and Omnipotent.

The Byzantines and the Persians reached an agreement about how most of the world should be divided between them but disputed over a few issues, such as the status of the Armenians and the area of Mesopotamia. Depending on who controlled them, the East or the West, the rulers of each area shifted. Another area of contention was Georgia. This dispute was solved in a foolish way: the governor was elected by the Persians, but he had to follow the procedures and regulations set by the Byzantines.

The Near East was the major trouble spot during the seventh century. At times, the main roads were controlled by the East (Persians) and at other times by the West (Byzantines). The Westerners reached as far as Ctesiphon on certain occasions while the Easterners reached the heart of Byzantium. And, in a state of affairs that bears a striking resemblance to world politics of today, the people of Arabia were urbanized and had close contacts with one of the superpowers of the day, the Persians, and imitated their way of life. On the other hand, those who lived in the north were highly influenced by the Byzantines. The allies of the East concluded military agreements with the Persians which guaranteed their protection from aggression by the tribal Arabs who attacked their villages. A group of Arabs were hired to defend the urbanites from unanticipated aggression by the East. The Arabs in the North, the Ghassanites, were pro-Byzantine. They were supposed to protect themselves from aggression by the central tribes, but their army could not operate in the desert. Therefore, they used the northern Arabs to fight the central Arab tribes. Consequently, the Middle East was the battleground of the East and West.

At the time of the revelation of Surah al-Rum in the seventh century, the Arabs in general were impoverished. The followers of the Prophet were in still worse conditions. Yet, even under such circumstances, the Prophet told Muslims that if they had strong faith, were righteous and

fought for the cause of Allah, they would conquer the world. He was not alluding to the Quraysh or Mecca, but to the entire world (including the governing powers). Ridiculing his claim, the intellectuals asked which world, which power the Prophet referred to. They argued that Mecca was situated in the middle of the superpowers, which had divided the world between themselves and controlled everyone. In addition, they maintained that even if all Arabs supported the Prophet and acted as weapons, they could not do anything to harm the Eastern or Western powers. The intellectuals wondered how Muslims who could not even resist Abu Jahl and Umayyat Ibn Khalaf expected to stand any chance against the powers of the East and the West.

The message of the Qur'an was for both the careless and sophisticated intellectuals who were well-acquainted with the East and West as well as the responsible enlightened souls who were among the followers of the Prophet.

The enlightened Muslims were forced to endure severe torture, but they nevertheless undertook the responsibility of defending the rights of the poor and deprived people who were the prisoners of the East and the West. The Qur'an addresses both groups: "Alif, Lam, Mim. The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land." (XXX : 1-2). It was during 624-625 CE that the Persians fought and defeated the Romans. They occupied the Middle East. Due to the death of their emperor and changes in their internal system and external affairs, the Romans lost the battle with the Persians. In turn, they had to retreat and leave the areas of dispute for the Persians. The surah predicted the victory of the West over the East in a period of less than ten years. It happened when the Eastern Roman Empire once again attacked the Near East and recaptured the lost territories; the soldiers reached the vicinity of Ctesiphon. "And they, after their defeat, will be victorious within ten years. Allah's is the Command in the former case and in the latter" (XXX : 3-4). Ayah 4 was revealed immediately after the prediction in Ayah 3 in order to warn the intellectuals and dogmatists who considered themselves to be experts in international politics, capable of analyzing and commenting on the causes and consequences of world affairs. The Qur'an says: "Allah's is the command." Neither the East nor the West rules the world, but Allah does. Authority is not the responsibility of the Western Empire (Caesar) or the Eastern Empire (Khusrow).⁸ The superpowers do not control the strength, life, death, future and fate of nations. "Allah's is the Command" in all cases. It has never been and will never be that superpowers control the world. Everything is dictated by Allah; He is the Omnipotent.

Although the West was defeated by the East, it was predicted that the West would soon be victorious. How? Because the power to rule the world lies in the hands of Allah. (This has always been and will continue to be the case). The Qur'an states: "And on that day, believers will rejoice." (XXX : 4). But, what did the success or failure of the superpowers have to do with the poor believers who were being tortured in Mecca? Some commentators on the Qur'an have interpreted the verse to mean that it was better for the Byzantines to be victorious since they were Christian, or "the people of the book" (ahl al-kitab) than the Persians who were Zoroastrian. What a misleading explanation! After all, what would the believers who were dying under the tortures of Umayyat Ibn Khalaf gain if the Byzantines were victorious? Why should they feel happy? Their happiness would have been like the delight of certain Iranians over John Kennedy's election in 1960.

Another example of misleading comments was the account regarding the birthday of the Prophet: "The Prophet was born during the time of the 'just king'." Do people really know how "just" king Anushirvan was? After all, he was the king of Persia both when the Prophet was born in Arabia and later when his followers were tortured by Abu-Sufyan. Besides, what kind of

privilege was it for the Prophet to be born when there was a just king in some other part of the world? This coincidence lacks any significance. Some commentators considered the Byzantines to be the "believers" because they were Christian and had a divine book. Such commentators, too, make a mistake by overlooking the fact that after the Prophet and the declaration of Islam, Christianity, which until then had been genuine and respected, became outdated. This development was applicable to the Byzantine-Christians who were called polytheists (mushrikun) by Islam and the Prophet. How could the Byzantines be true believers (Mu'mininun) when they believed in the "Trinity?"

The Qur'an addressed the poor and oppressed followers of Muhammad in Mecca. Unable to migrate, they had nowhere to go, not even to Medina, their hometown. Nevertheless, it assured them that they would be free and happy. Clearly, the Qur'an presented a universal law, a law that was lettered in the surah. It included God's Command (amr), that is, a declaration that Allah's will would prevail. That was to be the destiny of history. The latent effect of imperialistic schemes of the superpowers to oppress others, expand areas of control and confiscate the natural resources of other nations is self-deterioration and decadence. It is inevitable that imperialism and colonialism will breed their own enemies. The more oppressive and aggressive the exploiting powers become, the closer they get to self-decay and destruction. Eventually, but shamefully, they will release what they have captured and will escape. Remember what happened to the United States, a contemporary superpower, not too long ago in Vietnam. It was forced to withdraw and abandon all of its interests in the area.

Because of their size and their competition, the two superpowers are in conflict constantly. Their pride and military strength force them into militarism, exploitation and savagery. Such a direction causes their productive qualities and capacities to deteriorate internally. As a result, the youth of these nations, who should be involved in productivity and building the economy, are obliged to fight in distant foreign lands. There, they will kill or be killed and contribute to mutual weakening and destruction.

History reveals that Khashayarsha (Xerxes), one of the kings of Achaemenid dynasty, sent thousands of young Persian troops to Greece to destroy Athens. Motivated by the pride of militarism at its peak, the Persian youth sailed on the Mediterranean Sea in order to set Athens ablaze and conquer the capital. It is hard to imagine the amount of energy, money, art and technology the Persians employed to achieve their goal. But alas, they were all wasted. Thousands of young, productive farmers who had been expected to support the older family members, and many thousands more who had to work hard to finance those fighting in the battlefield (eight or nine individuals for each fighting soldier), were all diminished. Their energies and potentials were converted into weapons which were destroyed in the distant foreign deserts. What emerged was a confrontation between enemies who did not know each other, nor did they know the cause of their fighting. (Max Weber has a special and unusual definition for armies. He describes them as "groups of individuals who do not know each other but fight one another for the sake of those who know each other but do not fight one another".) Beside the hundreds of thousands of human resources, Khashayarsha (Xerxes) sent along thousands of boats and ships to transport them across the Mediterranean Sea. Most of them encountered a major storm which interrupted their journey and drowned the young soldiers. Upon receiving the report of the disaster, Khashayarsha (Xerxes) ordered other soldiers "to go and punish the storms for not being polite with the Persian soldiers." Imagine even though the best human resources, energy and techniques were buried deep in the sea, the king demanded a repetition of the previous disaster.

Another king who abused thousands of Persian youth was Nadir shah [the founder of Afshar dynasty]. He sent them to conquer India and dethrone Muhammad Shah [the Mogul emperor]. However Muhammad Shah's crown was soon returned and the Persians bade him farewell. The venture was undertaken solely for the purpose of demonstrating Nadirshah's power. What a high price to pay just to show one's power and prestige! One man, Nadirshah, was responsible for the loss of so many human lives.

The Byzantines were not in a better position. They had invested great time and energy in the East in order to prove that they could reach Ctesiphon. What were their losses? What was the level of degeneration that the Byzantine youth experienced during their battles in foreign lands? Did they know what they were fighting for? They were in the same category as the Persians. And finally, the soldiers returned home with many psycho-emotional disturbances. Exactly thirty years after the events relating to the Byzantines, the same poor Arabs, organized in groups of a few thousand, circled the Arabian Peninsula and attacked the Persian bases. Before the [Persian] Royal Army could complete its preparatory measures for war, including organizing its weapons and armaments, as well as repairing the golden ornamentation for their combat horses. The Arab army conquered the Persian Empire. The same destiny befell the Byzantine Empire also. Before the Byzantine army could arise from its slumber to consider its logistics and assign officers to its ranks, the Arabs entered and conquered their empire.

The circumstances of the two great powers were such that thirty to thirty-five years after the revelation of the Surah al-Rum, Musallib ibn Kharijah, along with the limited assistance he received from 'Umar of Medina, was able to defeat the Persian Empire." One of the world's greatest bases, near Isfahan, was the central camp of the Persian army. According to al-Tabari, the officer in charge of the camp came out of his tent and appeared before the Muslim army, which consisted of about three thousand soldiers dressed in simple white shrouds and carrying swords. The commander of the world's most advanced army, which possessed the most sophisticated contemporary weapons and technology available, confronted the Muslim army and demonstrated his readiness to fight. The officer of the Muslim army volunteered to start the dual but the Persian officer, who was in no condition to accept the offer, refused. Instead, he suggested that each of them should count his or his forefathers' victories, and whoever had the higher number starts the dual. The Muslim officer accepted the proposal. Addressing the poor Muslim officer, the Persian officer asked him who he was. The Arab replied that he was "the son of his father." Then, the Persian officer proudly recalled the long line of most of his ancestors and traced his ancestors back to old Persian warriors. It was obvious that the Persian should be the one to begin the dual.

The Persian officer threw his spear toward the Muslim. Although the Arab fell off his horse, he immediately stood up and grabbed his sword. He jumped back onto his horse and announced that it was his turn to fight. The Persian officer retorted that both of them should sit down and negotiate their differences. He claimed that the problem could not be solved by warfare, and therefore advocated a political solution. The Arab consented to the Persian's suggestion. Two hours later, the Persian officer met with the Islamic army and signed an agreement which was unique in history. When was the agreement concluded? Only eighteen or nineteen years after hijrah, which was also about eight years following the death of the Prophet. How fascinating! The great Eastern empire yielded to a group of poor Arabs who had been of no significance during those days.

One side of the agreements related to the Eastern Empire, while the other related to the same poor people mentioned in the surah. Ironically, those poor people, not knowing where the East

or West were, had laughed when they heard about such places. It would be worthwhile to mention some of the articles of the agreement. The Arabs demanded that if they attacked a Persian village, the Persian army was obligated to assist them since they had a shortage of people and arms. The Persian officer politely agreed. The Arabs demanded that when their army needed horses, the Persians would have to provide them. The officer once again politely agreed. And something funnier. The Arab officer demanded that if one of his officers, while travelling through a Persian city, saw a Persian officer who was riding a horse, the Persian would have to dismount and give the horse to the Arab. The Persian commander agreed to all the demands and concluded the agreement with the Arabs.

Arabs concluded a similar agreement with the Western empire. At the same time that the Muslims confronted the Persians, another group of a few thousand others had entered the Byzantine territory. Under the leadership of 'Amr ibn 'As they attacked the fortress of Babylon which was the world's greatest military castle, controlled by the Byzantines. It is not clear how such a sturdy and well-protected fortress was conquered by a group of poor and hungry Muslims who reached its heart like a bullet. After losing Babylon, the Roman army lost any hope of resisting the Islamic army.

Consequently, a million well-trained soldiers with modern weapons could not confront the well-disciplined Islamic army. East and West were conquered by the Muslim believers. In the case of Persia in the battle of Dhat al-Salasil, King Yazdegerd ordered his well-trained army to be confined with heavy chains so as to stop them from deserting. How could a soldier fight under such conditions? He did not know why he had to fight or with whom. Was the enemy the person who had tied his legs with chains or the one who confronted him on the battlefield? Every soldier was confused about the battlefield. As a result, the Persian and the Byzantine armies yielded to the Muslim army as soon as they were confronted.

Alif-Lam, Mim. The Romans have been defeated, in the near land, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within ten years. Allah's is the command in the former case and in the letter, and in that day believers will rejoice. (XXX :1-4).

It is inevitable that the superpowers will confront one another, to the degree that factors such as corruption, prostitution, depression and lack of productivity will decay and destroy their administrative systems, social networks and spirit to fight. They will be so weak that minor attacks by poor and hungry Muslim soldiers will destroy them. The impoverished and miserable believers will be free and rejoice on the day when they, with the help of God, are victorious. Allah grants victory to those who deserve His help and qualify for the victory. "He helps to victory who He will. He is the Mighty, the Merciful." (XXX : 5). Allah will bless the weak group of people who struggle for His cause. Furthermore, the attributions made in the above ayah are confirmed by the events discussed. "It is a promise of Allah. Allah fails not His promise, but most of mankind know not." (XXX : 6).

Allah promises that every group which struggles for its rights will be victorious over the powerful masses. This is a universal law. The promise of Allah, which is applicable to all times and places, is never false, but the majority of people do not realize this. The so-called intellectuals do not know that Allah's promise is the real fact of nature. What do they know? "They know only mere appearances of the life of the world." (XXX : 7). They only know about superficial considerations including who has better administration, where the most sophisticated arms are and where the bulk of the wealth is located. In addition, the intellectuals

evaluate and appraise situations, but in a superficial and short-sighted manner. "They only know mere appearances of the life of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter." (XXX : 7).

They do not know how the situation will end, because they cannot see beyond the obvious. The Qur'an calls upon politically frustrated intellectuals to adopt a better way of thinking in order to have a more optimistic outlook. It tells them not to rely heavily on their conjectures, evaluations and political analyses. To achieve a better and deeper analysis, the Qur'an calls upon the individual to think about humanity in general, the existing world system and the world's sovereignty. Instead of interpreting world news on a daily basis (i.e., "intellectualizing"), mankind should try to discover and understand the source of the world's destiny, Allah's will.

Have they not pondered upon themselves? Allah created not the heavens and the earth, and that which is between them, save with truth and for a destined end. But truly many of mankind are disbelievers in meeting with their Lord. (XXX : 8).

In the first part of ayah 8 (above), the following phrases should be emphasized: "save with truth," which means based on facts, and "a destined end," which means a determined period. Obviously, Allah created the earth, heavens, mankind, races, classes, societies, systems and powers for a specific purpose. In other words, each of Allah's creations has a role to play in this life. When pondering over the universal laws of creation, the sovereignty of societies and existence in general, one can conclude that the creation of the universe is based on certain facts. Therefore, the fate and future of mankind are subject to the same facts. The claim that an oppressor always remains in power and the fate of mankind lies in the hand of the Caesars and the Khusrows is false. They are temporary powers and the subject of daily news; they exist today and are gone tomorrow. If one appreciates the essence of "a destined end," one discovers that the ruling powers will only survive for a short period of time. Let them declare their eternity, masters of mankind and owners of the world! They are oblivious to the destiny of history whereby every power will deteriorate and perish eventually. As for the state of affairs today, even though the Western and Eastern Empires have divided the world between themselves, this situation will not last long. They are destined to decay and destruction; thus, the Muslims should be assured and hopeful of a future victory. The following ayah refers to such a destiny: "But truly many of mankind are disbelievers in meeting with their Lord." (XXX : 8).

After a philosophical discussion, the Qur'an reminds mankind of historical realities. It states that the world is not limited to the Arabian Peninsula nor only to the Eastern and Western empires. It advises man to study history in order to see beyond the geographical limitations of the seventh century. "Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequences for those who were before them?" (XXX : 9).

What a surprise! The Qur'an asks the half-enlightened souls and pseudo-intellectuals why they do not travel on the earth. Are they not familiar with the end of those who lived before them? Do they not realize the destiny of history and the fate of creatures? What actually happened to those superpowers? The so-called intellectuals should remember what became of the previous superpowers, and compare it to the conditions and the end of contemporary ruling powers. Not limiting themselves to Mecca, Medina and Constantinople, they should evaluate the situation and reach a conclusion. "They were stronger than those in power." (XXX : 9).

There were powers which had been much stronger than the Persian and Byzantine empires but nevertheless, they had perished. An examination of history and archeology (in terms of the era and status of their colonies) reveals that ancient powers were much stronger than the

contemporary superpowers. "They were stronger than these in power and they dug the earth and built upon it more than these have built." (XXX : 9). Even more than contemporary colonialists, the powers of the past searched most of the earth and whenever possible acquired colonies. Because of their might, they were able to exploit numerous areas. "Messengers of their own came unto them with bayyinat (clear proofs of Allah's Sovereignty)." (XXX : 9).

As indicated in the verse, however, they were presented with "clear proofs." Such an insightful phrase! It shows the way to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong and to make people aware of their society and the era which they are living in. During the time when the majority of the people were living in darkness, lacked direction, were aimless and overcome by the rumours and propaganda of the oppressors, the "clear proofs" were revealed. While the oppressors were occupied with their selfish and false belief in their undivided authority, the prophet's message initiated enlightenment. Amidst an environment of darkness, confusion, short-sightedness, submissiveness by and oppression of the masses, and superpowers being overcome by their illusions, the messengers appeared with their clear guidance for mankind. "Surely Allah wronged them not, but they did wrong themselves." (XXX : 9).

In spite of Allah's gift of guidance, the people were heedless. Of course, this was not the fault of Allah but of the people, since He did not leave them alone and helpless. By sending them His clear guidance through the messengers, He laid down the rules, and to the masses He sent hope, light and awareness. Allah addressed both the oppressor and the oppressed. He told the rulers that their power would perish. As for the masses, He informed them that their weakness would be temporary and that they would soon gain power. Furthermore, if people remained oppressed, it was their own fault. He who is oppressed has himself helped the oppressor. "But they did wrong themselves. Then Evil was the consequence to those who dealt in evil, because they denied the revelations of Allah and made a mockery of them." (XXX : 9-10).

The following Qur'anic verse is as genuine and permanent as the natural phenomena. It clearly states that if a group of impoverished and oppressed people became aware of their situation, recognize the correct path and decide to free themselves, Allah guarantees their success. ". . . In Allah's help to victory. He helps to victory whom He will. He is the Mighty and the Merciful." (XXX : 5). Allah will help them. Whoever is associated with Allah will be victorious over any power. These are Allah's words and will definitely be actualized. The Qur'an goes on to say: "Allah produces creation...." (XXX : 11) Allah wants to raise the position of the poor and miserable hostages of the Third World (the dwellers of Mecca, for example, whether then or now) and get rid of their inferiority complexes. They will no longer feel helpless, weak, depressed and humiliated when comparing themselves to the superpowers, who are technologically and militarily more advanced. Allah will humiliate and destroy the super powers; Allah is the only power to be considered and relied upon. The contemporary superficial powers are to be rejected. "Allah produces creation. Then he reproduces it. Then unto Him ye will be returned 99 (XXX : 11). Throughout the Qur'an, the destiny of mankind which gives hope and encouragement to the oppressed groups of all eras and systems is reiterated. "So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion...." (XXX : 30).

People should not be confused by the various leaders, parties and powers that exist. They should not idolize a leader for many Years investing their faith and aspirations in him and then, when that person disappears, find themselves devoid of all hopes and goals. Had they filled their hearts with love and relied on their faith (instead of having love for and faith in the individual), they would have been heroes themselves. No, they chose to be puppets and worshippers of powers whose god was dead long ago and who pledged allegiance to Satan. "So set thy purpose,"

rise and get rid of the false hopes and fruitless expectations that exist as a result of relying on the East or the West. "So set thy purpose for religion...." (XXX : 30). Further- more, move toward the religion which is the genuine source of faith. Which faith? Which belief? The one that saves mankind from all the false faiths and leads it to the truth. Return to such a faith. But which one is it? ". . . Religion as a man by nature upright the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created man." (XXX : 30). Instead of being the hostage and puppet of the superpowers, man must return to his human nature. He must be himself, have self- respect and discover all the internal hidden powers. Allah exists in man, so rely on Him since He is the real source of hope and happiness. But which nature should mankind resume? ". . . In which He has created men." (XXX : 30).

It is based on nature that Allah created all of mankind, that is, human nature and not the nature of those who rely on Eastern or Western empires and favour one ruler or class over the other. It is a nature that considers humanity to be Allah's representative and guardian of the earth. It is a nature that gives mankind sovereignty over the world and freedom from being a hostage.

So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's Creation. That is the right religion ... (XXX : 30).

All the phenomena in the world (i.e., whatever Allah created) abide by the rules of creation. Mankind must rely on those rules and regulations, which no law or person can change. Even the superpowers which claim to be capable of changing the direction of the entire world, as well as history, are totally impotent when their power is compared with that of Allah. "There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion ..." (XXX :30). Man can always depend on this powerful and everlasting ideology. It will never fail. " ... But most men know not" (XXX :30). Suddenly the Qur'an speaks of rain: And of His signs is this: He shows you the lightening for fear and for hope and sends down water from the sky, and thereby quickens the earth after her death. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for folk who understand." (XXX : 24).

(Due to the shortage of time, only a brief explanation will be presented). The rain falling from the clouds is symbolic; it may refer to ordinary rain as well as the descent of consciousness, love and the true faith which enters the heart of a dead nation to revive it just as the spring rain gives life to the dead trees.

He brings forth the living from the dead and He brings forth the dead from the living and He revives the earth after her death. And even so ye be brought forth. Corruption does appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done. That He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return. (XXX : 40-41).

Corruption appears all over. What causes it? Man's own hands And now, man witnesses and tastes the fruits of his actions (i.e. poverty and humility). Perhaps humanity will arise from its slumber and change its way of life. "Allah is He who created you and then sustained you, then causes you to die, then gives life to you again" (XXX : 40). Mankind is then reminded of history: "Say (O Muhammad to the disbelievers): Travel in the land, and see the nature of the consequences for those who were before you. Most of them were idolaters." (XXX : 42). It is apparent why they had misfortunes. Their bodies are buried under the demolished palaces of power and treasures of wealth. Their power is gone with the wind. After commanding mankind carefully to study history, the Qur'an again reminds: "So set thy purpose resolutely for the right

religion . . . Allah is He who sends the winds. (XXX : 43 and 48). The same source that rules nature rules human societies. The same principles that affect the earth, agriculture, animals, and Plants similarly will affect the psyche and fate of societies, classes, groups intellectuals, devoted individuals and nations in general. Allah grants man to think about nature and draw conclusions. An examination of history is not sufficient; nature must also be examined: "Allah is He who sends the winds so that they raise clouds and spreads them along the sky as pleases Him...." (XXX : 48).

Allah sends the winds, that is, the breezes of wisdom and awareness to a generation or a nation, "so that they raise clouds." (XXX 48). He raises the clouds full of sensation, affection, love, awareness, and determination, "and spreads them along the sky." These little "potentials" rise upward toward the sky, join together and establish a heavy mass which stretches from one horizon to the other. Then, it will start to rain. The drop of rain will fall from the hearts of these clouds. "And when He makes it to fall on whom He will of His bondsmen...." (XXX : 48). Once the rain touches those whose hearts are ready to accept it, they will be revived and grow, "then they rejoice." (XXX : 48). Those people are the ones who will receive the good tidings and become hopeful. The cold and gloomy days of their lives will be transformed into warm and refreshing days. "Look, therefore, at the prints of Allah's mercy (in creation)...." (XXX : 50).

Man must observe the signs of Allah's mercy. Even if he is tortured today, he must remain hopeful of the future, "Look therefore at the prints of Allah's mercy (in creation): How He quickens the earth after her death. Lo! He verily is the Quickener of the dead, and He is able to do all things." (XXX : 50). Allah can do anything He wishes. Surely He can revive a dead nation, that is, shower it with the rains of awareness, love and faith. But, on the other hand, the Qur'an does not want to present the situation in an idealistic fashion. It does not want to portray a utopia or use baseless slogans to make people happy. Considering the facts, analyzing problems and being realistic are extremely important and not to be ignored. The Qur'an says: "For verily thou (Muhammad) can not make the dead to hear...." (XXX : 52).

The Prophet and the liberators who wished to motivate the poor and oppressed people who were humiliated by the two superpowers succeeded in certain areas. They encouraged the people, helped them gain their honour, freed them from Eastern or Western slavery and enlightened them about their duty to determine their own fate and future and finally become the rulers of the world. But the Prophet could not force the dead to hear him. The dead are the ones who are like cadavers or statues, devoid of the senses and energies of life. They cannot realize anything. Even if they are presented with countless pieces of evidence, they will not believe and will follow their own whims. Their own jealousy, self-centeredness and narrow-mindedness causes their death. Those who listen to no one cannot be forced to hear. Therefore, it is impossible for them to hear any message. How fascinating! Is the Qur'an talking about the people of the seventh century or addressing humanity today? Pay attention to the Qur'anic wisdom. One cannot make the dead listen. One cannot make the deaf or those who do not want to hear listen. Even if they do, they cannot understand.

Regardless of the fact that they read, listen, think and remain objective, such people cannot hear the message since they lack their senses and consciousness. The message will not be absorbed unless the person is ready to listen and wants to hear what is being said, "For verily then (Muhammad) can not make the dead to hear." (XXX : 52). Such a clear message and true fact! Who would guess these words are fourteen hundred years old? Was this said to the few Meccan desert tribes or is it for the civilized people of the twentieth century? Can any conscious individual today say anything more factual and effective than what is being said? Verily then (Muhammad) can not make the dead to hear, nor can thou make the deaf to hear the

call when they have returned to flee. Nor can thou guide the blind out of their error. Thou can make none to hear save those who believe in Our revelations so that they surrender (unto Him)." (XXX : 52-53).

The blind will not see in any case. Only those who can see, feel lost, and search hard to escape the darkness can receive guidance. Those who are blind and do not even want to listen cannot be led or saved from being lost. Only those who believe in and respect the sign of Allah (i.e., Muslims who yield to the will of Allah because they possess instincts which enable them to realize that fact and logic direct them to the truth) can be saved. Allah is He who shaped you out of weakness, then appointed after weakness strength.... But those to whom knowledge and faith are given will say: 'The truth is, ye have tarried, by Allah's decree, until the Day of Resurrection. This is the Day of Resurrection, but ye used not to know. (XXX :54 and 56).

Man should not feel desperate. Allah created him out of weakness. Those who are endowed with knowledge, love and faith would suggest paying closer attention to the last ayat of Surah al-Rum, in order to understand the conclusion. "Verily we have coined for mankind in the Qur'an all kinds of similitudes and yet if thou came unto them with a miracle, those who disbelieve would verily exclaim: Ye are but tricksters!" (XXX : 58).

Throughout the Qur'an, Allah sent humanity all the true signs, examples and proofs for any situation or process. Man's way was enlightened while his responsibilities were designated. The principle of existence was created around faith and hope. So many examples, including the study of natural phenomena, the study of history, the destruction of the powers which thought they were eternal and the victory of the poor, weak, oppressed and homeless groups of people who thought they would always be oppressed and lacked hope for freedom were presented to mankind.

The genuinely conscious individuals who exhibited understanding were not impressed by the glory of the superpowers, nor were they cheated by false and baseless slogans regressive slogans which talked about humanity and human rights but in reality destroyed mankind by making people believe they were so weak and powerless that their affairs had to be determined by others who were more capable. Those fortunate ones who possessed awareness were able to return to the true faith (i.e., from falsehood to the truth, to the real source of all powers, to the sovereignty of the world, to the philosophy of creation, to the destiny of time, to society, to matter, to nature, to the natural laws and to the blooming flowers in spring and the falling leaves in autumn). They did not consider the happenings of only one or two centuries as the basis for their analysis and beliefs. Instead, they were more clear headed and analytical. They examined history, not limiting themselves to their immediate environment (considering it the whole world), but investigating all times and places. They understood the fate of the previous powers, who were even more oppressive and colonialist than the contemporary superpowers. They saw that the latter had perished, leaving behind ruins so that humanity would learn a lesson. They also saw how a small and impoverished group of people were victorious over strong powers. This was how they discovered themselves and found the Almighty's power, the power of God. They found faith and hope in themselves and realized that the East is a wild wolf while the West is a rabid dog. They realized that because the East and the West were overwhelmed by the desire for additional colonies, aggression, selfishness, fascist behaviour and exploitation, they inevitably gave birth to corruption, nihilism, aimlessness, worthlessness. Eventually, those "great" super- powers were overthrown by a group of poor and oppressed people who came from a deserted area of the earth and had not dared to say a word when tortured by Abu Jahl and Umayyat Ibn Khalaf.

The present generation of Muslims can rule the world if they know Allah, understand the world and discover the great values that Allah has bestowed upon them. With a strong spirit, they can overcome the powers and become the world's leaders during this generation. But how is that possible in light of the existing hardship, poverty, deprivation, desperation, inability, pessimism, misunderstanding and improper education? The Qur'an tells mankind: 'So have patience O Muhammad)! Allah's promise is the very truth, and let not those who have no certainty make thee impatient.' (XXX : 60). The believers must be patient and show resistance. The promise of Allah is true. The believers should not allow non-believers to change their minds or alter their positions.

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