

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī

Vol. 3

Juz' 3: Sūrat al-Baqarah 254 – 286 & Sūrah Āli 'Imrān 1 – 95



# Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī

The General Judgments of the Qur'an  
and Clarification of what it contains  
of the Sunnah and *Āyahs* of Discrimination

Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr  
ibn Farḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī

## Vol. 3

Juz’ 3: Sūrat al-Baqarah 254 – 286 & Sūrah  
Āli ‘Imrān 1 – 95

translated by  
Aisha Bewley

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# Table of Transliterations

ء	'	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	'
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

## Long vowel

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī
أَؤْ	aw
أَيَّ	ay

## Short vowel

َ	a [ <i>fathah</i> ]
ُ	u [ <i>dammah</i> ]
ِ	i [ <i>kasrah</i> ]

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Arabic for the *āyats* is from the Algerian State edition of the *riwāyah* of Imam Warsh from the *qirā'ah* of Imam Nāfi' of Madina, whose recitation is one of the ten *mutawātir* recitations that are mass-transmitted from the time of the Prophet ﷺ.

There are minor omissions in the text. Some poems have been omitted which the author quotes to illustrate a point of grammatical usage or as an example of orthography or the usage of a word, often a derivative of the root of the word used in the *āyah*, but not the actual word used. Often it is difficult to convey the sense in English. Occasionally the author explores a grammatical matter or a tangential issue, and some of these may have been shortened. English grammatical terms used to translate Arabic grammatical terms do not have exactly the same meaning, sometimes rendering a precise translation of them problematic and often obscure.

The end of a *juz'* may vary by an *āyah* or two in order to preserve relevant passages.





## 2. SŪRAT AL-BAQARAH – THE COW 254 – 286

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ  
فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٍ وَلَا شَفْعَةٍ ۚ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٤﴾

**254 You who believe! give away some of what We have provided for you before a Day arrives on which there is no trading, no close friendship and no intercession. It is the unbelievers who are the wrongdoers.**

Al-Ḥasan said that this *āyah* refers to obligatory *zakāt*. Ibn Jurayj and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr said that it includes both obligatory *zakāt* and *ṣadaqah*. Ibn ʿAṭiyyah says that this is sound, but the previous *āyahs*, which mention fighting and tell us that Allah drives back the unbelievers by means of the believers, makes it probable that this is a recommendation rather than an explicit command. It is in the Way of Allah. That is reinforced by the words at the end: *‘It is the unbelievers who are the wrongdoers,’* meaning: ‘Fight with your lives and also by spending your wealth.’

According to this interpretation, spending wealth is sometimes mandatory and sometimes recommended according to whether *jihād* is obligatory individually or not. Allah commands His slaves to spend from what He has provided them with and blessed them by, and warns them against withholding from spending until a day comes on which it is not possible to buy or sell or obtain maintenance. It is as He says: *‘He says, “My Lord, if only You would give me a little more time so that I can give ṣadaqah.”’* (63:10)

‘*Khullah*’ (close friendship) means sincere mutual love. It is derived from the word *takhallala*, which refers to the interpenetration of secrets between friends. *Khilālah*, *khulālah* and *khalālah* are all words for true friendship and love. A poet says:

How do you connect with someone

whose true friendship (*khalālah*) is like the welcoming shade?

*Khullah* can also mean sweet herbage. It is said that ‘*khullah*’ is the bread of camels and salty herbage is their fruit. *Khullah* means need and poverty. It is also

a male camel in its second year, as al-Aṣmā'ī said. An expression says, 'They brought them a round cake of bread as though it were the foot of a *khallah*.' One says of a dead person, 'May Allah put right the gap (*khallah*) he has left.' *Khallah* is also sour wine. *Khillah* is the scabbard of a sword. More will be said about the derivation of Khalīl (friend) in *Sūrat an-Nisā'*. Allah tells us that there will no friendship or intercession in the Next World except by the permission of Allah. Its reality is mercy from Him to honour the one who is permitted to intercede.

Ibn Kathīr and Abū 'Amr recited '*bay'a fihī walā khullata walā shafā'ata*' in the accusative without *tanwīn*. The same is found in 14:31 and 42:23. The rest recite all of that in the nominative and with *tanwīn*. Having a *fathah* in the general negative embraces all the aspects of this category. It is as if it is an answer to the person who asks, 'Is there any trading on that day?' asking a general question which has a general negative response. '*Lā*' with a negative noun is in the position of one noun in the nominative case by the inceptive whose predicate is 'on it'. If you wish, you can make it an adjective of 'Day'. Those who make it nominative put '*lā*' in the position of '*laysa*' and give an answer which is not undefined. It is as if it is the answer to someone who asks, 'Is there trading on it?' omitting 'any'. So the answer is not changed from the nominative case. Makkī said, 'The nominative is preferred because most reciters have it, and it is permitted outside of the Qur'an. [SOME OMISSION]

#### It is the unbelievers who are the wrongdoers.

'Unbelievers' is the inceptive and 'who' is a second inceptive and 'wrongdoers' is the predicate of the second. If you wish, 'who' can be redundant for the distinction and 'wrongdoers' is the predicate of 'unbelievers'. Aṭā' ibn Dīnār said, 'Praise be to Allah who said this, and did not say that the wrongdoers are the unbelievers!'

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ  
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٢٥٥﴾

255 Allah, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Self-Sustaining. He is not subject to drowsiness or sleep. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before

**them and what is behind them but they cannot grasp any of His knowledge save what He wills. His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth and their preservation does not tire Him. He is the Most High, the Magnificent.**

**Allah, there is no god but Him,**

This is the Throne Verse, the Master of the *āyahs* of the Qur'an and the greatest *āyah*. It was revealed at night and the Prophet ﷺ summoned Zayd and he wrote it down. It is related that Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah said, 'When the *Āyat al-Kursī* was revealed, every idol in this world prostrated, every king in this world prostrated and the crowns fell from their heads. The *shayṭāns* fled, hitting one another, and went to Iblīs and told him what was happening among them. He commanded them to investigate what had occurred and they went to Madīnah and heard that the Throne Verse had been revealed.'

The Imams report from Ubayy ibn Ka'b: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Abu-l-Mundhir! Do you know which verse of the Book of Allah is the greatest?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He repeated, "Abu-l-Mundhir! Do you know which verse of the Book of Allah is the greatest?" I said, "*Allah, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Self-Sustaining.*" He struck my chest and said, "May you enjoy this knowledge, Abu-l-Mundhir!"' Abū 'Abdullāh at-Tirmidhī al-Ḥakīm added, 'By the One Who has my soul in His hand, this *āyah* has a tongue and two lips with which it proclaims the sanctity of the King at the foot of the Throne.' Abū 'Abdullāh said, 'Allah revealed this *āyah* and made the reward for its reciter both immediate and later. The immediate reward is that it protects the one who recites it from disasters.' It is related that Nawf al-Bikālī said, 'In the Torah the Throne Verse is called the friend of Allah.' He means that the one who recites it is called 'dearest' (*‘azīz*) in the domains of the heaven and earth.' When 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf entered his house, he would recite the *Āyat al-Kursī* in the four comers of his house, intending by that to guard the four sides and to expel Shayṭān from the House.

It is related that 'Umar wrestled a jinn and threw him to the ground. The jinn said to him, 'Let me go and I will teach that which will protect you from me.' He let him go and he said, 'You will be protected from me by the Throne Verse.' This is sound. We read in a tradition, 'If someone recites the *Āyat al-Kursī* after every prayer, the Master of Majesty and Nobility will take his spirit directly and he will be like one who fights alongside the Prophets of Allah until he is martyred.' Alī said, 'I heard your Prophet ﷺ say on the minbar, "If someone recites the *Āyat al-Kursī* after every prayer, only death keeps him from entering the Garden, and only

someone who is true or a worshipper will persist in it. If someone recites it when he goes to bed, Allah will protect him, his neighbour, his neighbour's neighbour and the houses around him.”

We find in al-Bukhārī in the story of Abū Hurayrah regarding Shayṭān, when the Prophet ﷺ put him in charge of guarding the *zakāt* of Ramadan, that he said, ‘Messenger of Allah, he claimed that he would teach me some words by which Allah would benefit me. So I let him go.’ ‘What were they?’ he asked. He said, ‘He told me, “When you go to bed, recite the Throne Verse from beginning to end.” He told me, “A guardian will continue to watch over you and Shayṭān will not come near you until morning.”’ They were the most eager of people for good. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘He has told you the truth although he is a liar. Do you know to whom you were speaking the past three nights, Abū Hurayrah?’ ‘No,’ he answered. He said, ‘That was Shayṭān.’

We find in the *Musnad* of Abū Muḥammad ad-Dārimī that ash-Sha‘bī said that ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd said, ‘One of the Companions of Muḥammad ﷺ met a man of the jinn and they wrestled and the human being threw him down. The human told him, ‘I see that you are scrawny and thin, with forearms like those of a dog. Are all the jinn like this or just you?’ He answered, ‘No, by Allah! I am considered one of the strong ones among them! Let us wrestle again. If you throw me down, I will teach you something which will be of benefit to you!’ ‘Yes,’ he replied. So he wrestled and he threw him down. The jinn said, ‘Recite the Throne Verse.’ ‘Yes,’ he agreed. He said, ‘No one recites it in a house but that *shayṭān* leaves it, breaking wind like a donkey and then will not enter it again until morning.’ Abū Nu‘aym transmitted it from Abū ‘Āṣim ath-Thaqafī from ash-Sha‘bī. Abū ‘Ubaydah mentioned it in the *gharīb* hadiths of ‘Umar from Abū Mu‘āwiyah from Abū ‘Āṣim ath-Thaqafī from ash-Sha‘bī from ‘Abdullāh. ‘Abdullāh was asked, ‘Was it ‘Umar?’ He said, ‘Who else could it have been but ‘Umar?’

It is reported in at-Tirmidhī from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Whoever recites the beginning of *Sūrah al-Mu‘min* (40:1-3) and the Throne Verse in the morning will be protected until evening. Whoever recites them in the evening will be protected until morning.’ He said that it is a *gharīb* hadith. Abū ‘Abdullāh at-Tirmidhī al-Ḥakīm said that it is related that the believers are recommended to seek protection by reciting it after every prayer.

Anas has a *marfū‘* hadith going back to the Prophet ﷺ in which he said, ‘Allah revealed to Mūsā: “If someone continues to recite *Āyat al-Kursī* after every prayer he will be given what the thankful are given: the reward of the Prophets and the actions of the true. I will stretch out my hand to him with mercy, and all that

keeps him from entering the Garden is the arrival of the Angel of Death.” Mūsā said, “Lord, is there anyone who hears this who will not persevere in it?” He replied, “Among My slaves I will only give it to a Prophet, a true person, a man I love, or a man I want to be martyred in My Path.” It is reported from Ubayy ibn Ka’b that Allah Almighty said to Musa, ‘Musa, anyone who recites the *Āyat al-Kursī* after every prayer will be given the reward of the Prophets.’ Abū ‘Abdullāh said, ‘I think that it means that he will be given the reward of the action of the Prophets. None but the Prophets have the reward of Prophethood.’ This *āyah* contains the truth of *tawḥīd* and the lofty attributes. It is fifty words long, and each word contains fifty blessings. It is equal to a third of the Qur’an, as a hadith reports. Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah mentioned that. Within a long hadith, Abū Dharr said, ‘I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ which is the greatest *āyah* revealed by Allah in the Qur’an. He answered, ‘*Allah, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Self-Sustaining.*’ Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘The noblest *āyah* in the Quran is the Throne Verse.’ One scholar said, ‘That is because the name of Allah is repeated it, either directly or indirectly, eighteen times.’

#### **the Living, the Self-Sustaining.**

These are combined attributes of Allah. ‘*Al-Ḥayy*’ (The Living) is one of His Beautiful Names. It is said that it is the Greatest Name of Allah. It is said that when ‘Īsā wanted to bring the dead to life, he made this supplication, ‘O Living, O Self-Sustaining.’ It is said that it was used by Āsaf ibn Barkhiyā when he wanted to bring the throne of Bilqīs to Sulaymān. He made the supplication: ‘O Living, O Self-Sustaining.’ It is said that the tribe of Israel asked Mūsā about the Greatest Name of Allah and he said to them, ‘*Ayā Hayā Sharā Hayā*’ which means: ‘O Living, O Self-Sustaining.’ It is said that it is the supplication people at sea should make when they fear drowning. Aṭ-Ṭabarī said that some people said that it is like a description of Himself and that should not be examined. It is said that He called Himself ‘Living’ since He disposes of matters exactly and determines things precisely. Qatādah says that it is the Living who does not die. As-Suddī says that it means the One who goes on forever. Labīd said:

If you see me sound today,

I am not among the living from Kilāb and Ja’far.

‘*Al-Qayyūm*’ (The Self-Sustaining), means the One who undertakes to uphold everything He has created, as Qatādah said. Al-Ḥasan said that it means the One who attends to every self in respect of what it earns until He has repaid it for its

actions, as He knows them, and nothing is hidden from Him. Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘It means: the One who does not change or vanish.’ Umayyah ibn Abi-ṣ-Ṣalt said:

The heavens and the stars as well  
as the sun and the moon only abide  
As determined by the Self-Sustaining Guardian.  
The gathering, the Garden and bliss  
are only for a matter which is immense.

Al-Bayhaqī said that he saw in ‘*Uyūn at-tafsīr*’ that Ismā‘īl aḍ-Ḍarīr said, ‘*Qayyūm* means the One who does not sleep,’ which is taken from the verse after it. Al-Kalbī said, ‘*Al-Qayyūm* is the One with no beginning.’ Al-Anbārī mentioned that. A poet says:

The Master of the Throne is the One Who provides for people.  
He is Living and the One Who sustains them.

#### **He is not subject to drowsiness or sleep.**

Then Allah denies that He is subject to drowsiness or sleep. Drowsiness, according to all, is what affects the eyes and sleep is what affects the heart. Al-Mufaḍḍal made a distinction between them: *sinah* is what is in the head, *nu‘ās* is in the eye, and sleep (*nawm*) is in the heart. Ibn Zayd said that *wasnān* is when someone rises from sleep so confused that he might even unleash his sword against his family. Ibn ‘Aṭīyah said, ‘What Ibn Zayd said is debatable. It is not understood from Arabic.’ As-Suddī said, ‘*Sinah* is the wind of sleep which touches the face and makes a person drowsy.’ Generally speaking, it is fatigue which affects a person. What is meant by the *āyah* is that Allah Almighty is not affected by lapses or weariness in any way. The root of *sinah* (drowsiness) is *wasnah*. Sleep is that which is heavy and removes a person’s consciousness.

People mention what Abū Hurayrah reported about a story which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recounted on the minbar: ‘Once Mūsā wondered about whether Allah slept and so Allah sent an angel to him to keep him awake for three nights and then gave him two bottles, one in each hand, and commanded him to look after them. He began to fall asleep and his hands almost released them. Then he moved them apart. When he fell asleep, his hands banged together and the bottles broke. He said that Allah made an example by that illustrating the fact that if He were to sleep, the heavens and the earth would not be maintained.’ This hadith is not sound. Others, including al-Bayhaqī, said that it is weak.

**Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him.**

He owns them, so He is the Owner and Lord of all. *Mā'* is used even though sentient beings are included in the whole. Aṭ-Ṭabarī said, "This āyah was revealed when the unbelievers said, "We only worship idols so that they might bring us close to Allah.""

**Who can intercede with Him except by His permission?**

It is affirmed in this āyah that Allah gives permission to whomever He wishes to be an intercessor. They are the Prophets, the people of knowledge, those who strive, angels and others whom Allah has honoured and ennobled. Then they only intercede for those with whom Allah is pleased as we know from His words: *'They do not intercede except on behalf of those with whom He is pleased.'* (21:28)

Ibn 'Atiyyah said, 'It appears that the scholars and righteous intercede for those who have not reached the Fire and are between the two stages, or have arrived there, but have righteous deeds to their credit.' In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in 'One of the remaining chapters on the Vision' we find: 'The believers will say, "Our Lord, our brothers used to pray with us and fast with us."' This is intercession for those who are borderline cases. As for the intercession of miscarried children at the gate of the Garden, it is for their parents. This intercession is for relatives and acquaintances. The Prophets intercede for the rebels of their community who are in the Fire for their wrong actions. It is not on account of kinship or acquaintance, but on account of faith alone. There then remains the intercession of the Most Merciful of the Merciful for those who were immersed in errors and wrong actions for which the intercession of the Prophets does not prevail. As for the intercession of Muhammad ﷺ to hasten the reckoning, that is his alone.

In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim adequately explains how intercession takes place. The intercessors will enter the Fire and bring people out who deserve to be punished. So it is not unlikely that the believers have two intercessions: intercession for those who have not reached the Fire and the intercession for those who have reached it and entered it. May Allah protect us from it! We find mentioned in the hadith of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī: 'Then the bridge will be set up over Hell and intercession will be allowed. They will say, "O Allah, safety! Safety!"' It was asked, 'Messenger of Allah, what is the bridge?' He answered, 'A very slippery place on which are snares, hooks, and hard thorns which are like that found in Najd known as *sa'dān*. Some of the believers will cross over it like the blink of an eye, some like lightning, some like the wind, some like a bird, and some like the faster steed and camel. Some will escape unhurt, some will be scratched but released, and some will be pushed into the Fire until the believers are delivered from the Fire. By the One



Who has my soul in His hand, on the Day of Rising there is none of you who will make more earnest entreaties of Allah for his rights than those the believers will make for their brothers in the Fire. They will say, “Our Lord, they used to fast with us, pray with us and go on ḥajj!” They will be told, “Go and bring out those you know.” Their forms are forbidden to the Fire and they will bring out many people who were taken by the Fire up to middle of their thigh or up to their knees. Then they will say, “None of those about whom You commanded us remains in it.” Then the Almighty will say, “Return and bring out whoever you find who has the weight of a dinar of good in his heart.” They will bring out many people and then will say, “Our Lord, we have not left in any of those about whom You commanded us.” Then He will say, “Return and bring out whoever you find who has the weight of half a dinar of good in his heart.” They will bring out many people and then will say, “Our Lord, we have not left in any of those about whom You commanded us.” Then He will say, “Return and bring out whoever you find who has an atom’s weight of good in his heart.” They will bring out many people and then say, “Our Lord, we have not left any good in it.” Abū Sa’īd said, ‘If you do not believe me in respect of this hadith, then, if you wish, recite: *“Allah does not wrong anyone by so much as the smallest speck. And if there is a good deed Allah will multiply it and pay out an immense reward direct from Him.”* (4:40) Then Allah Almighty will say, “The angels have interceded, the Prophets have interceded and the believers have interceded. None remains but the Most Merciful of the merciful.” He will take a handful from the Fire, bringing out people who never did any good at all and have been turned into charcoal...’

It is mentioned from Anas that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘I will say, “O Allah, give me permission for those who said, “There is no god but Allah.”’ He said, “That is not for you. By My might, pride, immensity and omnipotence, I will bring out those who said, “There is no god but Allah.”’” Abū Hurayrah mentioned that he ﷺ said, ‘When Allah has finished judging between His slaves and wants to bring out those among the people of the Fire He wishes to, He will command the angels to bring out of the Fire anyone among those to whom Allah desires to show mercy who did not associate anything with Allah, those who said, “There is no god but Allah.”’ They will recognise them in the Fire by the mark of prostration. The Fire will consume all of the son of Ādam except for the mark of prostration. Allah has forbidden the Fire to consume the mark of prostration.’

These hadiths indicate that the intercession of the believers and others is for those who have entered the Fire. May Allah protect us from it! Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah said that it applies both to those who have reached it and those who have not reached



it. It is possible that that is taken from other hadiths. Allah knows best. Ibn Mājah transmitted in the *Sunan* from Anas ibn Mālīk that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘People will be lined up in rows on the Day of Rising (Ibn Numayr said ‘the people of the Garden’) and a man from the people of the Fire will pass by a man and say, “Do you not remember me? Do you not remember the day you asked me for water and I gave you a drink?” The man will intercede for him. A man will pass another man and say, “Do you not remember the day I brought you water for purification?” and he will intercede for him.’ Ibn Numayr said: ‘He will say, “Do you not remember the day when you sent me to get something you needed and I did it?” and he will intercede for him.’

As for the intercession of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, there is disagreement about it. It is said that it will occur three times, or two or five times. It will be dealt with elsewhere. We have also dealt with this in *Kitāb at-Tadhkirah*.

#### **He knows what is before them and what is behind them**

‘Them’ in this phrase refers to everyone who has sentience. They are all included in ‘*everything in the heavens and the earth*.’ Mujāhid said that ‘*what is before them*’ is this world and ‘*what is behind them*’ is the Next World. Ibn ‘Aṭīyah said, ‘All this is valid and there is nothing wrong with it because “what is before” means everything to which a person advances and “what is behind” is all that came before.’ Something similar to this was stated by as-Suddī and others.

#### **but they cannot grasp any of His knowledge save what He wills.**

Knowledge here means what is known, meaning that people do not encompass any of what He knows. This is like the statement of al-Khiḍr to Mūsā when the sparrow dipped its beak in the sea, ‘My knowledge and your knowledge does not diminish the knowledge of Allah except as this sparrow would diminish this sea.’ This and examples like it refer to known things because the knowledge of Allah is an attribute of His Essence which cannot be separated from it. The meaning is that no one knows other than what Allah wishes him to know.

#### **His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth**

In his *History*, Ibn ‘Asākir mentioned from ‘Alī that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘The Footstool is made of pearl and the Pen is made of pearl and the length of the Pen is seven thousand years and the height of the Footstool is only known by Allah.’ Ḥammād ibn Salamah related from ‘Āṣim ibn Bahdalāh, who is ‘Āṣim ibn Abi-n-Nujūd, from Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh that Ibn Mas‘ūd is reported as saying,

‘There is a distance of five hundred years between every heaven and five hundred years between the seventh heaven and the Footstool, and between the Footstool and the Throne is a distance of five hundred years. The Throne is above the water and Allah is above the Throne. He knows what you are in and what you are on.’

Ibn ‘Abbās said that His Footstool is His knowledge, and at-Ṭabarī preferred that. Indicating that is the derived word *kurrāsah* (notebook) which contains knowledge. Scholars are also called ‘*karāsīy*’ (thrones) because they are relied on. That is similar to the saying, ‘the supporting pegs of the earth.’ A poet said:

Noble people and a troop surround them,  
those who know (*karāsīy*) events when they occur.

It is also said that the Footstool is Allah’s Power by which He sustains the heavens and the earth, as the word *kursī* can be used for the underpinning of a thing. *Kursī* is the base of a wall which holds it up. This is close to what Ibn ‘Abbās said about ‘*His Footstool encompasses*’. Al-Bayhaqī said, ‘We related from Ibn Mas‘ūd and Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr that Ibn ‘Abbās said that “*His Footstool encompasses*” means His knowledge.

Other transmissions from Ibn ‘Abbās and others indicate that what is meant by the Footstool is something connected to the Throne. Isrā‘īl related from as-Suddī reported that Abū Mālīk said, ‘It is the rock on which the seventh earth stands and is the whole extent of creation in all its vastness. Four angels are over it. Each of them has four faces: a human face, a lion’s face, an ox’s face and an eagle’s face. They attend to it and encompass the earths and heavens. Their heads are under the Footstool, and the Footstool is under the Throne. Allah has placed His Footstool above the Throne.’ Al-Bayhaqī said, ‘This statement indicates that there are two Footstools. One is under the Throne and one is above the Throne.’ It is related in what Asbāṭ related from as-Suddī from Abū Mālīk, and from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās, from Murrah al-Hamdānī from Ibn ‘Abbās, and from Murrah al-Hamdānī from Ibn Mas‘ūd from some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about this that the heavens and earth are inside the Footstool and the Footstool is in front of the Throne.

The people of atheism apply it to the immensity of the kingdom and majesty of the sultan. They deny the existence of the Throne and Footstool and say that they are nothing. The people of the truth consider their existence conceivable since the power of Allah is vast and one must believe in it. Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī said, ‘The Footstool is the place where the feet are put. It creaks as a saddle creaks.’ Al-Bayhaqī said, ‘We also related this from Ibn ‘Abbās and we mentioned that it

means, as he thinks, that it is part of the Throne, where the feet of someone on a throne would be placed. There is, however, no affirmation of “place” in it.’ Ibn Buraydah related that his father said, ‘When Ja‘far came from Abyssinia, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked him, “What was the most extraordinary thing you saw?” He answered, “A woman with a basket of food on her head. A horse passed and knocked it off. She sat down, collecting her food and then she turned to it and said, ‘Woe to you for a Day when the King will sit on His Throne and hear a tale from the wrongdoer and give to the wronged!’” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ affirmed her words and said, “A nation is not pure (or ‘how can a nation be pure?’) when its weak do not take their due from the strong?”’

Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah said, ‘The statement, “The Footstool is the place of the feet” mean that it is part of the Throne of the All-Merciful, like the place for the feet on the thrones of kings. It is an immense created thing in front of the Throne. It is ascribed to it as the footstool is ascribed to a king’s throne.’ Al-Ḥasan ibn Abi-l-Ḥasan said that the Footstool is the Throne itself, but this is not acceptable. The hadiths clearly state that the Footstool is a creation which is in front of the Throne and the Throne is greater than it.

Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī related that Abū Dharr said, ‘I asked, “Messenger of Allah, what is the greatest āyah revealed to you?” He replied, “The *Āyat al-Kursī*.” Then he said, “Abū Dharr, the heavens and the Footstool are only like a ring cast in the desert, and the size of the Throne compared to that of the Footstool is like the size of the desert compared to the ring.”’ Al-Ajurrī, Abū Ḥātim al-Bustī in his sound *Musnad* and al-Bayhaqī transmitted it and said that it is sound. Mujaḥid said, ‘The heavens and the earth in comparison to the Throne are like a ring cast into the desert.’

#### **their preservation does not tire Him**

This āyah informs us about the immensity of what Allah has created. It is deduced from that that Allah is greater still since the preservation of this immense matter does not tire Him at all.

The word ‘tire’ means to find something burdensome and hard. This is how Ibn ‘Abbās, al-Ḥasan, Qatādah and others explained it. Az-Zajjāj says that the ‘him’ can refer to Allah or it can refer to the Throne. If it is the Footstool, that is part of the business of Allah.

#### **He is the Most High, the Magnificent.**

‘*Al-‘Alī*’ (The Most High) refers to height of power and position, not place,

because Allah is free of being confined by space. Aṭ-Ṭabarī related that some people said that He is High above His creation as His place is above the places of creatures. Ibn ‘Aṭīyah said, ‘This is the view of ignorant anthropomorphists! The aspect is not related.’ ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Qurṭ related that in the Night Journey the Messenger of Allah ﷺ heard glorification in the high heavens: ‘Glory be to Allah, the High, the Most High! Glory be to Him and exalted is He!’ *‘Alī* and *‘ālī* is the one who conquers and overcomes things. The Arabs use the verb *‘alā* for overcoming and overpowering. A poet said:

When we overpowered (*‘alawnā*) and firmly were over them,  
We left them flat for the vultures and wild beasts.

*‘Al-‘Azīm*’ (The Magnificent) describes His immense power, importance and nobility, not His physical size. Aṭ-Ṭabarī related that some people said *‘azīm* means esteemed (*mu‘azzam*) as is said that *‘atīq* (ancient) means *mu‘attiq*. Other people rejected that and said, ‘Had it meant “esteemed”, that would imply that He is not magnificent before He created creation and after it is annihilated since there would be none to esteem Him then.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ  
بِاللهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللهُ سَمِيعٌ  
عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾

**256 There is no compulsion where the *dīn* is concerned. Right guidance has become clearly distinct from error. Anyone who rejects false gods and believes in Allah has grasped the Firmest Handhold, which will never give way. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.**

**There is no compulsion where the *dīn* is concerned.**

The word *‘dīn*’ in this *āyah* means what is believed and religion since it is followed by *‘Right guidance has become clearly distinct from error’*. Compulsion can take place in judgments regarding oaths, sales, gifts and other things. This will be explained in *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16:106), since this is not the place for it. Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān recited *‘ar-rashad’*. That is also related from al-Ḥasan and ash-Sha‘bī. The form *rashada*, *yarshudu*, *rushd* is used when something you love is attained but the form *rashida*, *yarshadu*, *rashad* is also possible. *Ghawā* is its opposite. An-Naḥḥās said that.

Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah related that Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī recited *rushād* rather than *rushd* and al-Ḥasan recited *rushud*. The root of ‘ghayy’ (error) refers to when someone is misguided in what he believes or thinks. The word ‘error’ (*ghayy*) is not used to denote complete misguidance.

Scholars disagree and hold various positions regarding the legal status and meaning of this *āyah*.

– It is said that it is abrogated because the Prophet ﷺ forced the Arabs to adopt the *dīn* of Islam and fought them and was only pleased with Islam for them. Sulaymān ibn Mūsā took that view, saying, ‘It is abrogated by “O Prophet! Do *jihād* against the unbelievers and the hypocrites.” (9:73)’ That is related from Ibn Mas‘ūd and many commentators.

– It is not abrogated and was sent down about the people of the Book in particular and means that they are not forced to adopt Islam when they pay *jizyah*. Those who are forced are the idolaters. Only Islam is accepted from them, and they are the ones about whom the *āyah*: ‘O Prophet! Do *jihād* against the unbelievers and the hypocrites’ (9:73) was revealed. This is the position of ash-Sha‘bī, Qatādah, al-Ḥasan and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk. The evidence for this position is related by Zayd ibn Aslam from his father, ‘I heard ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb say to an old Christian woman, “Become Muslim, old woman, you will be safe. Allah sent Muḥammad with the Truth.” She replied, “I am an old woman and close to death.” ‘Umar said, “O Allah, bear witness!” and he recited, “There is no compulsion where the *dīn* is concerned.”’

– Abū Dāwūd reported from Ibn ‘Abbās that this was revealed about the Anṣār. There was a woman all of whose children had died. She made a vow that if she had a child who lived she would make it a Jew. When the Banu-n-Naḍīr were exiled, among them were many of the children of the Anṣār. They said, ‘We will not abandon our children!’ Then Allah revealed this. One variant has, ‘We did what we did and we thought that their *dīn* is better than what we had.’ When Allah brought Islam, they denied it and this was revealed. Whoever wished remained with them and whoever wished, entered Islam. This is the position of Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, ash-Sha‘bī and Mujaḥid, but he added that the reason that they were with the Banu-n-Naḍīr was through suckling. An-Naḥḥās said, ‘The position of Ibn ‘Abbās regarding this *āyah* is the best position since its *isnād* is sound.’

– As-Suddī said that the *āyah* was revealed about a man of the Anṣār called Abū Ḥuṣayn who had two sons. Some merchants came from Syria to Madīnah with oil and when they wanted to leave, his sons went to them. They invited the two sons to become Christians and they did so and went back with them to Syria.

Their father went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to complain about this and asked the Messenger of Allah to send someone to bring them back. Then the words: ‘*There is no compulsion where the dīn is concerned*’ were revealed. He had not at that time been commanded to fight the People of the Book. He said, ‘Allah has put them far away. They are the first to disbelieve.’ Abu-I-Huṣayn felt annoyed that the Prophet ﷺ did not send someone after them. Then Allah revealed: ‘*No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them*’ (4:65). Then ‘*No compulsion*’ was abrogated and he was commanded to fight the People of the Book in *Sūrat at-Tawbah*. The sound view for the reason behind the words: ‘*No, by your Lord, they are not believers ...*’ is the hadith of az-Zubayr with his Christian neighbour about water as will be dealt with in *Sūrat an-Nisā*, Allah willing.

– It is said that it means ‘do not call those who have submitted through the sword compelled and forced’.

– It is said that it was related about captives who were People of the Book. They are not compelled when they are adults. If they are Magians, young or old, or idolaters, they are compelled to adopt Islam because their captivity does not help them when they are idolaters. Do you not see that their slaughtered animals are not eaten nor their women married? That is what Ibn al-Qāsim reported from Mālik. Ashhab said that children are considered to have the *dīn* of those who have captured them. If they refuse that, they are compelled to become Muslim. Children have no *dīn* and that is why they are compelled to enter Islam so that they do not go to a false *dīn*. When other types of unbelievers pay the *jizyah*, they are not forced to become Muslim, whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs, Quraysh or otherwise. This will be dealt with in *Sūrat at-Tawbah*.

### **Anyone who rejects false gods and believes in Allah**

The word for ‘false gods’ (*tāghūt*) comes from the root *ṭaghā* which means ‘to exceed the bounds’. The word can indicate the plural or the singular. It is said that the root of *tāghūt* is *ṭughyān* which means ‘overstepping the limits’. Al-Mubarrad said that it is a plural, but Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah says that that is rejected. Al-Jawharī said that the word *tāghūt* refers to soothsayers, *shayṭāns* and every leader in misguidance. It can have a singular meaning as we see in 4:60 or a plural meaning as we see in 2:257. It does have an actual plural: *ṭawāghūth*.

### **has grasped the Firmest Handhold,**

This phrase is a metaphor. Commentators disagree about metaphorical usage

(*tashbīh*). Mujāhid says that ‘the Firmest Handhold’ is true belief and as-Suddī says that it means Islam. Ibn ‘Abbās, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk said, ‘It is *‘lā ilāha illa-llāh*.’ All these understandings actually amount to the same thing.

**which will never give way.**

Mujāhid said, ‘This should be understood alongside Allah’s statement that *“He never changes a people’s state unless they change what is in themselves.”* (13:11)’ In other words, He will not remove the designation of believer from them until they actually disbelieve. The word for ‘give way’ (*infiṣām*) means to break, but not completely. *Qaṣm* is completely breaking. Al-Jawharī said, ‘*Faṣm* is breaking, but not completely.’ The verb is used of rain stopping and a fever ending. When rejection of falsehood and faith in Allah are part of what the tongue articulates and the heart believes, Allah hears what is said and knows what is believed.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ  
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ  
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

**257 Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. But those who disbelieve have false gods as protectors. They take them from the light into the darkness. Those are the Companions of the Fire remaining in it timelessly, for ever.**

The word ‘*walī*’ (Protector) signifies the One who helps His believing slaves as al-Khaṭṭābī said. Qatādah said that the darkness mentioned in the *āyah* refers to misguidance and light to guidance. Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk and ar-Rabī‘ said much the same thing. Mujāhid and ‘Abdah ibn Abī Lubābah said that this was revealed about some people who believed in ‘Isā ﷺ. When Muhammad ﷺ came, they rejected him. That was their being taken out of the light into the darkness. Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah said, ‘The one with this belief who had a stronger light in it left it for darkness. The wording of the *āyah* has no need of specification. It applies to every disbelieving community who had partial belief, like the Arabs had. That is because Allah is the Protector of those of them who believed and He brought them out of the darkness of disbelief into the light of belief. Those who disbelieved after the coming of the sent Prophet ﷺ were misguided by their *shayṭāns*. It is as if Shayṭān brought them



out of faith when they were ready to enter it and so they will enter the Fire for their disbelief. That is justice and Allah is not asked about what He does.’ Al-Ḥasan recited ‘*tawāghīt*’ in the plural which means *shayṭāns*. Allah knows best.

الْمَرْتَرِ إِلَى الَّذِي حَآجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ-إِنِّيُهِ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ إِذْ قَالَ  
إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي رَبَّنِيَّ وَنُيْتُ قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ  
إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ  
فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

**258 What about the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, on the basis that Allah had given him sovereignty? Ibrāhīm said, ‘My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die.’ He said, ‘I too give life and cause to die.’ Ibrāhīm said, ‘Allah makes the sun come from the East. Make it come from the West.’ And the one who was an unbeliever was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people.**

The expression ‘What about?’ (*a lam tara*) literally means ‘Have you seen?’ and is frequently used in Arabic to introduce something surprising or astonishing. The ‘one’ referred to in the *āyah* is generally taken to be Nimrod, Numrūdh ibn Kūsh ibn Kan‘ān ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ, the king of his time and the one who built the fire into which Ibrāhīm was thrown and who was killed by a gnat. This is the position of Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, ar-Rabī‘, as-Suddī, Ibn Ishāq, Zayd ibn Aslam and others. He was destroyed when he tried to fight against Allah. Allah sent a great cloud of gnats against him and they covered the sun and consumed his army until only their bones were left. One entered his brain and ate it until it became the size of a mouse. The dearest of people to him after that was the one who hit his head with a hammer! He suffered for forty days.

Ibn Jurayj said that he was the first king in the earth. Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah says that this is rejected. Qatādah said that he was the first to become a tyrant; he was the one who built the tower at Babel. It is said that he was king of the entire earth and was one of two unbelieving kings. The second king was Nebuchadnezzar. It is also said that the one who argued with Ibrāhīm was Numrūdh ibn Fālikh ibn ‘Abir ibn Shālikh ibn Arfakhshand ibn Sām. Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah related all of that. As-Suhaylī related that he was Numrūdh ibn Kan‘ān ibn Ḥām ibn Nūḥ. He was king over the black people. He was appointed by aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk who was known as



al-Azdahāq. His name was Bīwarāsb ibn Andarāst and he was the king of all regions. He is the one who was killed by Afīdūn ibn Athfiyān.

Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk was a tyrant whose kingdom lasted a thousand years. He was the first to crucify people and the first to cut off hands and feet. Nimrod had a son called Kush, or a similar name, and a son called Nimrod the younger. Nimrod the younger ruled for a year and Nimrod the elder ruled for four hundred years, as they say.

There are two versions of how the debate reported in this āyah occurred. One is that the people went out to a festival they used to observe and Ibrāhīm went to their idols and broke them. When they returned, he said to them, ‘Do you worship something you have carved?’ They asked, ‘Who do you worship?’ He said, ‘I worship my Lord who gives life and causes to die.’ It is also said that Nimrod had complete control of the food stores of his people and, when they wanted to eat, they had to buy food from him. When they went to him, they prostrated to him. Ibrāhīm entered and did not prostrate. He asked him, ‘Why do you not prostrate to me?’ He replied, ‘I prostrate only to my Lord.’ Nimrod demanded, ‘Who is your Lord?’ Ibrāhīm answered, ‘My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die.’

Zayd ibn Aslam said, ‘This Nimrod had control of all the provisions of his people. When people came, he demanded, “Who is your Lord and God?” “You,” they answered. “Give them provision,” he said. Ibrāhīm came to seek provision and he asked him the same question. Ibrāhīm replied, “My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die.” When he heard this, Nimrod said, “I give life and cause to die.” Then Ibrāhīm asked him the question about the sun and he was dumbfounded. He said, “Do not give him provision.” Ibrāhīm returned to his people with nothing. He passed by a heap of fine sand and said to himself. “If I fill my sacks with this, when I enter the children will be happy until I can see to them.” He did that and when he reached his house, the children were happy and began to play on the sacks. He fell asleep from exhaustion and his wife said, “I will prepare some food for him and he will find it ready when he wakes up.” She opened one of the sacks and found it to be the finest flour and baked it. When he rose, she put it before him. He asked, “Where is this from?” She said, “From the flour you brought.” Ibrāhīm knew that Allah had done that.’

Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah mentioned that Abū Ṣāliḥ said, ‘The Prophet Ibrāhīm went to obtain food and was unable to obtain it. He passed by some red sand and took some of it and returned to his family. They asked, ‘What is this?’ He answered, ‘Red wheat.’ They opened it and found that it was red wheat. When any of it was planted, it produced ears that were full of grain from bottom to top.

Ar-Rabī‘ and others said about this story that, when Nimrod said, ‘I give life and cause to die,’ he summoned two men. He killed one and released the other. He said, ‘I gave life to that one and made that one die.’ Then Ibrāhīm countered that with the question about the sun which dumbfounded him. It is related in a hadith that Allah said, ‘The Final Hour will not come until I bring the sun from the west so that it is known that I have the power to do that.’ Then Nimrod commanded Ibrāhīm to be thrown into the fire. That is what tyrants do. When they are opposed in something and unable to offer proof of their position, they inflict punishment. Allah saved Ibrāhīm from the fire as we will see later.

As-Suddī said, ‘When Ibrāhīm emerged from the fire, they brought him to the King. He had not been in his presence before that time. He spoke to him and asked, “Who is your Lord?” He replied, “My Lord is the One who gives life and causes to die.” Nimrod said, “I give life and cause to die. I will take four people and put them in a room and will not give them food or water until they are starving. I will bring them out and feed two and they will live and not feed two who will die.” Then Ibrāhīm countered with the question about the sun and he was dumbfounded.’

Legists have mentioned about this *āyah* that, when Ibrāhīm described his Lord with bringing to life and making die, it was a statement that could be taken literally or metaphorically. It should be pointed out that Ibrāhīm meant essential qualities in the first instance while Nimrod took what he said metaphorically and misrepresented it to his people. So Ibrāhīm left the argument and moved to an example which cannot be made metaphorical. *‘And the one who was an unbeliever was dumbfounded.’* The king could not argue and refute the second example nor could he say, ‘I am the one who brings it from the east’ because intelligent people would reject that.

This *āyah* indicates the permissibility of giving an unbeliever the title of ‘king’ when he has kingdom, might and elevation in this world. It also is an affirmation of the use of evidential argument in establishing the proof of a matter and this is often found in the Sunnah and Qur‘an. Allah says: *‘Produce your evidence if you speak the truth,’* (2:111) and: *‘Have you authority to say this?’* (10:68), meaning any evidence. Allah also described how Ibrāhīm argued with his people and refuted their worship of idols as we find in *Sūrat al-Anbiyā’* and elsewhere. He says in the story of Nūḥ: *‘They said, “Nūḥ, you have argued with us and argued much...”* (11:32) until he said, *‘I am innocent of the crimes which you commit.’* (11:36) Mūsā also argued with Pharaoh as seen in many *āyahs*.

All of this is instruction by Allah through question and answer and debate in

the *dīn* because that shows the difference between truth and falsehood by the demonstration of the proof of the truth and the invalidity of false evidence. The Prophet ﷺ debated with the People of the Book and called on them to invoke Allah against themselves after the argument as will be dealt with in *Āli 'Imrān*. Ādam and Mūsā argued and Ādam won the argument. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ argued with one another on the Day of the Verandah. They pushed one another, made affirmations and debated until the truth came from its people and allegiance was given to Abū Bakr. They also debated about the people of the Riddah. There are very many instances of that. The words of Allah: '*You are a people arguing about something of which you have knowledge*' (3:66) are evidence that arguing about something with knowledge is permitted for those who reflect. Al-Muzanī, the follower of ash-Shāfi'ī, said, 'Among the conditions of debate is that Allah should be intended by it and that what is clear should be accepted from it.' It is said that debating is not sound unless those who are debating are close or equal in respect of their level of knowledge of the *dīn*, intelligence, understanding and fairness. Otherness it is merely quarrelling and arrogance.

'Alī ibn Abī Tālib recited '*a lam tar*' with the jussive, but the majority vowel the *rā*' and the *yā*' is elided in the jussive. '*An ātāhu-llāhu-l-mulka*' is in the position of the accusative, meaning 'because Allah had given him' or 'for the sake of what Allah had given him.' Most recite '*ana uhyī*,' discarding the *alif* after the *nūn* of '*anā*' (I) in the connection, while Nāfi' and Ibn Abī Uways keep it because of meeting with the *hamzah*, as is the case throughout the Qur'an except in 7:188 where it is discarded as is done by the other reciters since that is rare. It only occurs three times in the Qur'an. It acts like that which does not have *hamzah* after it because of its rareness and so the *alif* is elided in the connection.

Grammarians said that in the case when the pronoun of the speaker has a *hamzah* and a *nūn*, as when you say '*ana*' or '*anah*', the *alif* and the *hā*' are to make the vowelling clear in the stop. When the word is connected to something, they are dropped because the word to which it is connected takes the place of the *alif*. It is rare to say '*anā fa'altu*' except in poetry. An-Naḥḥās said that the fact that Nāfi' kept the *alif* and recited '*anā uhyī*' has no logic. Makkī said that the Basrans consider the *alif* to be redundant and believe that the name is implied by the *hamzah* and *nūn* and the *alif* is added for strengthening. It is said that it is added by the stop to make the vowel of the *nūn* clear. According to the Kufans, the noun is '*anā*' in full. Nāfi' confirms the *alif* in the root according to their position, and those who elide it do so to lighten it, and because it is indicated by the *fathah* (a).

Al-Jawharī said, 'As for saying *ana* (I) it is a metonymic noun and is for the first

person alone. It only has the *fathah* (a) invariably to distinguish it from *an* (that) which is a preposition that puts the verb in the subjunctive case, and the final *alif* is to make clear the vowelling when there is a stop. If it occurs in the middle of speech it is dropped except when there is poor usage of language.

The word ‘dumbfounded’ (*bahita* and *buhita*) is used when someone is stopped and falls silent out of confusion. An-Naḥḥās and others said that. Aṭ-Ṭabarī said that some of the Arabs said that it is *bahata*. Ibn Jinnī said that Abū Ḥaywāh recited ‘*bahuta*’ which is a dialectical form of *buhita*. Ibn as-Samayfā’ recited ‘*bahata*’ meaning, ‘Ibrāhīm stunned the one who disbelieved.’ He said that it is permitted for *bahata* to be a dialectical variant of *bahuta*. Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Akhfash related ‘*bahita*’ like *khariqa* and *dahisha* and said that most of them have *bahuta*. Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah said that some people interpret the reading ‘*bahata*’ to mean ‘insulted and ejected’ when he was stopped and had no further device to use.

أَوْكَالِدِمْ مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَتَى بُحِيءٌ  
هَٰذَا اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُ  
قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَى  
طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى جِمَازِكَ وَلِتَّجْعَلَكَ  
ءَايَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنْشِرُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا  
فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

259 Or the one who passed by a town which had fallen into ruin?  
He asked, ‘How can Allah restore this to life when it has died?’  
Allah caused him to die a hundred years, then brought him  
back to life. Then He asked, ‘How long have you been here?’ He  
replied, ‘I have been here a day or part of a day.’ He said, ‘Not so!  
You have been here a hundred years. Look at your food and drink  
– it has not gone bad – and look at your donkey so We can make  
you a Sign for all mankind. Look at the bones – how We raise  
them up and clothe them in flesh.’ When it had become clear to  
him, he said, ‘Now I know that Allah has power over all things.’

**Or the one who passed by a town which had fallen into ruin?**

‘Aw’ (or) is a conjunction which has its normal meaning here. According to al-Kisā’ī and al-Farrā’ it refers back to the ‘What about...?’ in the previous *āyah*. Al-

Mubarrad said that it means: ‘Have you not looked at the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord? Have you not seen who he is? Like the one who passed by a town...’ The words imply that. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥusayn recited ‘or’ as ‘*a wa*’ with a *fathah* on the *wāw* as a conjunction to which the interrogative *alif* is added, and it indicates confirmation. A ‘*qaryah*’ (town) is called that because people gather (*qarā*) in it. The verb is used for water collecting in a place.

Sulaymān ibn Buraydah, Nājiyyah ibn Ka‘b, Qatādah, Ibn ‘Abbās, ar-Rabī‘, ‘Ikrimah and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk said, ‘The one who passed by the town was ‘Uzayr.’ Wahb ibn Munabbih, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr and ‘Abdullāh ibn Bakr ibn Muḍar said that it was Irmīyā’ (said by some to be Jeremiah), who was a Prophet. Ibn Ishāq said that Irmīyā’ is al-Khiḍr. An-Naqqāsh related that from Wahb ibn Munabbih. Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah said, ‘This is as you see, although one name is the same as the other because al-Khiḍr was a contemporary of Mūsā. The one who passed by the town was one of the clan of Hārūn some time later according to what Wahb ibn Munabbih related.’

If al-Khiḍr is Irmīyā’, it is not improbable since al-Khiḍr has been alive from the time of Mūsā until now according to the sound position on that, which will be talked about in *Sūrat al-Kahf*. If he died before this story, then the position of Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah is sound. Allah knows best.

An-Naḥḥās and Makkī related from Mujāhid that he was an unnamed man of the tribe of Israel. An-Naqqāsh said that it is said that he was the servant of Lūṭ. As-Suhaylī related that al-Qutaybī has one statement saying that it is Shu‘ayb and the one who restored it to life after it was ruined was Kūshik al-Fārisī. The town is Jerusalem as stated by Wahb ibn Munabbih, Qatādah, ar-Rabī‘ ibn Anas and others. He said that he came from Egypt and that his food and drink – referred to in the *āyah* – consisted of green figs, grapes and a pot of wine. It is also said that it was juice and it is said that it was a small amount of water.

It was Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the town. He was the governor of Iraq for Lohorasp and then Gushtasp, the son of Lohorasp, who was the father of Isfandiyar. An-Naqqāsh related that it is ‘the Overturned Cities’. Abū Ṣāliḥ transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās that Nebuchadnezzar attacked the tribe of Israel and captured many of them and took them to Babylon. ‘Uzayr ibn Sharkhiyā was one of them. He was one of the scholars of the Israelites. He went out one day for something he needed to Dayr Hizqal on the banks of the Tigris. He stopped under the shade of a tree. He tied his donkey up in the shade of the tree and then went around the town and did not see anyone living there. It was fallen down and deserted. He said, ‘How can Allah restore this to life when it has died?’

It is said that it was the town from which thousands fled out of fear of death referred to earlier in 2:243. Ibn Zayd said that. Ibn Zayd said that it was those people who left their homes in thousands in fear of death and Allah told them, 'Die!' A man passed by their decayed bones and stopped to look and said, 'How can Allah restore this to life when it has died?' Allah caused him to die a hundred years. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, however, says that this position of Ibn Zayd is contrary to the words of the *āyah* since the *āyah* mentions a town fallen into ruin with no one in it. So it indicates the town. Its being brought to life was by flourishing and the re-establishment of buildings and houses.

Wahb ibn Munabbih, Qatādah, aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, ar-Rabī' and 'Ikrimah said that the town was Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed it. There is a long account about the history of the tribe of Israel and when Irmīyā' or 'Uzayr stopped at the town which was a great hill in the middle of Jerusalem brought about when Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his army to move the earth to it until he made it like a mountain. Irmīyā' saw that the walls of the houses were collapsed onto their roofs and said, 'How will Allah bring this to life after its death?'

In the expression 'fallen into ruin' (*khāwiyatun 'alā 'urūshihā*) the word '*urūsh*' means roofs of houses and anything that is set up for the sake of shade or shelter. Part of the usage of '*urūsh*' is a trellis as in 16:68. As-Suddī said that the roofs fell in and the walls fell on top of them. Aṭ-Ṭabarī prefers it. Others said that it simply means that the place was uninhabited with the houses still standing and the expression simply means 'empty'. The root of the verb is *khalw*. 'Empty' can also mean 'collapsed'. *Khawā'* also describes a stomach empty of food. The verb is used of a woman whose womb becomes empty after giving birth. *Khawī* describes easy ground. Form II of the verb describes a camel kneeling with its belly off the ground and it also describes a man in prostration.

#### **He asked, 'How can Allah restore this to life when it has died?'**

This means: 'by what means and method?' The literal meaning of the expression is about bringing the town back to life by restoring its inhabitants and prosperity, as one uses the expression today for empty cities which are unlikely to be re-inhabited. So it means: 'How will this flourish after it has fallen into ruin?' It is as if this was a question expressing regret when the man who was standing reflected on his city where his family had lived and which he loved. Allah made a greater response than the asker had intended by his question: actually bringing the dead to life. Aṭ-Ṭabarī related that one of them said, 'This statement implies doubt

about Allah's power to bring things to life. This is an example he made to himself.' Ibn 'Aṭīyyah said that the question does not imply doubt about the power of Allah Almighty to bring the town to life and make it flourish. The doubt comes from being ignorant in another way. It is not correct to interpret the *āyah* as expressing doubt.

**Allah caused him to die a hundred years then brought him back to life.**

'Hundred' is in the accusative as an adverb. *Ām* means a year, and one says *'sinwan 'uwwam* for stress. We see this in poetry. It is implied that it is the plural of *ā'im* although it alone is mentioned because it is not a noun, but rather stress, as al-Jawharī said. An-Naqqāsh said that *ām* is a verbal noun like *'awm*, which means swimming. A year (*ām*) is called that because it is the amount of time it takes for the sun to 'swim' (*āma*) around the celestial sphere. So *'awm* is like *sabḥ*. Allah says: '*...each one is swimming (yasbaḥūna) in a sphere.*' (36:40) Ibn 'Aṭīyyah said, 'This is the idea behind what an-Naqqāsh said.' The literal meaning of this *āyah* is to make someone die by removing their *rūḥ* from their body.

In the story behind this *āyah*, it is related that Allah sent a king to refurbish it and renew it so that it was complete by the time the speaker was revived. It is said that seventy years after his death Allah sent a Persian king called Kushk [Cyrus] who refurbished it in thirty years. *Ba'atha* is to bring back to life.

**Then He asked, 'How long have you been here?'**

There is disagreement about the asker here. It is said that it was Allah Almighty. It is said that the man heard an unseen voice. It is said that it was Jibrīl or a Prophet or a believing man of the people who saw him. The most apparent position is that it was Allah because of the rest of the *āyah*. Allah knows best.

**He replied, 'I have been here a day or part of a day.'**

This is what he thought and so he was not lying when he said it. It is similar to the answer the People of the Cave gave in 18:19 when they said that they had been there for a day or part of a day when in fact they had been there for 309 years. They were not lying, but expressing what they thought to be the case. It is as if they were saying, 'What we think in our opinion is that we have been here for a day or part of a day.' That is similar to what the Prophet ﷺ said in the story about Dhu-l-Yadayn in respect of the prayer: 'I did not shorten and I did not forget.' Some people have said that it was an actual lie but he was not punished for it. A lie is to report something to be other than what it actually is. That is the same in both



knowledge and ignorance. This is clear in respect of fundamental principles. On this basis it is permitted to say that the Prophets are not protected from reporting something to be other than what it actually is when that is not intentional, just as they are not protected from oversight and forgetfulness. This is connected to this *āyah*, but the first view is sounder.

Ibn Jurayj, Qatādah and ar-Rabī‘ said that Allah made him die in the morning and then raised him up before sunset so that he thought that it was the same day. When he saw the remaining sun, he was afraid that he had lied in saying, ‘a day,’ so he added ‘or part of a day.’ He was told that he had been there a hundred years and he saw how the town was flourishing and its trees and buildings as evidence of that.

### **Look at your food and drink — it has not gone bad —**

It is said that his food and drink consisted of green figs which he had gathered from the trees of the town he passed by. Ibn Mas‘ūd recited *‘hādhā ṭa‘āmuka wa sharābuka’* (this is your food and drink) Ṭalḥah ibn Muṣarrif and others recite *‘unzur li-ṭa‘āmika wa-sh-sharābika li-mi’ati sannah* (Look at your food and drink for a hundred years.) Most recite *‘yatasannah’* with the *‘hā’* at the end while the two brothers [Ḥamzah and al-Kisā’ī] elide it. There is no disagreement that one stops at the *‘hā’*. Ṭalḥah ibn Muṣarrif also recited *‘lam yassanna’* and *‘wa-nzur’* (with *wāw* not *fā’*), assimilating the *tā’* into the *sīn*. According to the recitation of the majority, the *hā’* is part of the root and the *ḍammah* is elided for the jussive. It comes from *‘sannah’* (year), meaning that it has not been altered by the years.

Al-Jawharī says that *sannah* is the singular of *sunūn* or *sinīn*. Two things are said about what it is missing. The first is that it is a *wāw* and the other is that it is *hā’* and that its root is *sanḥah*, like *jabḥah* because it is from the expression *sanahat* and *tasannahat* used for palm-trees which have lasted for years. A palm-tree that is *sannā’* bears fruit some years and not other years. It is also called *sanḥā’*. One of the Anṣār said:

It is not a tree that is *sanḥā’* or propped up,  
but *‘arīyah* loans for years (*sanīn*) of drought.

*Asnahtu* means ‘I stayed with’ as does *tasannaytu*. You hire someone for a year (*musānāh* and *musānahah*). The diminutive is *sunayyah* and *sunayḥah*. An-Naḥḥās said, ‘If someone recites “*lam yatasanna*” he says *sunayyah* for the diminutive and the *alif* is elided for the jussive and stops on the *hā’* and says *‘yatasannah’*, the *hā’* being for making the vowel clear.’



Al-Mahdawī said, ‘It is possible that its root is from *sānaytuhu musānah*, i.e. “I hired him year by year’ or from *sānahtu* with a *hā’*. If it is from *sānaytu*, its root is *yatasannā* and the *alif* has been omitted for the jussive. It has a *wāw* in the root as indicated by *sanawāt* and the *hā’* in it is for silence. If it is from *sānahtu*, then the *hā’* is the *lām* of the verb and according to this, the root of *sanah* is *sanhah*. According to the first, it is *sanawah*. It is also said that it is derived from *asina*, the verb for water becoming brackish, but this would oblige an extra *alif* in the word.’

Abū ‘Amr ash-Shaybānī said that it came from Allah’s words: ‘*fetid* (masnūn) *black mud*’. (15:26) What it means is that it has not changed. Az-Zajjāj said. ‘That is not the case because “*masnūn*” does not mean “changed”, but poured out on the surface of the earth.’ Mujāhid said that it means ‘it has not become foul’. An-Naḥḥās said that the soundest of what is said about this is that it is from *sannah*, and that it has not been changed by the years. It is possible that it comes from the meaning ‘drought’ as Allah says: ‘*We seized Pharaoh’s people with years of drought* (sinīn)’ (7:130) and the words of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘O Allah, impose on them years of drought like those of Yūsuf.’ So it means ‘your food has not been changed by drying up’ or ‘it has not been changed by the passage of years,’ and so has remained fresh.

#### – and look at your donkey

Wahb ibn Munabbih and others said, ‘Look at how We re-connect its bones and bring it to life bit by bit.’ It is related that Allah brought it to life by re-connecting its bones and then clothing them in flesh until the donkey was completely restored. Then an angel came and breathed the spirit into it and the donkey stood up and brayed. This is what most commentators say. Wahb and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk also said that it can mean: look at your donkey standing, untouched after a hundred years, and the bones that he looked at were the actual bones after Allah brought its eyes and head to life while the rest of the body was dead. They said that Allah made people’s eyes blind to Irmīyā’ and his donkey for this period of time.

#### so We can make you a Sign for all mankind.

Al-Farrā’ said that putting the *wāw* before the word here indicates that it is a precondition for what is after it. It is a sign of resurrection after death. It can also indicate an interpolation. He was still the age he had been when he died and his sons and grandsons were old men. ‘Ikrimah said that he was forty when he died. ‘Alī related that ‘Uzayr’s wife was pregnant when he left and that he was fifty when Allah made him die for a hundred years. Then he was brought back to life

and returned to his family after his resurrection still fifty years old. He had a son who was a hundred years old and his son's son was fifty years old. Ibn 'Abbās related, 'When Allah brought 'Uzayr to life and he mounted his donkey and rode to his home, he did not recognise people nor did they recognise him. He found an old blind woman in his house who was the mother of the household. This woman had been twenty years old when 'Uzayr left. He asked her, "Is this Uzayr's house?" She said, "Yes!" and wept and then said, "'Uzayr left us in such and such a year." He said, "I am 'Uzayr." She stated, "'Uzayr has been gone for a hundred years." He replied, "Allah made me die for a hundred years and then brought me to life again." She said, "'Uzayr was someone whose supplication for the sick and afflicted was answered. Ask Allah to restore my sight to me." He prayed to Allah and wiped her eyes with his hand and she was healed where she was, as if she had been released. She said, "I testify that you are 'Uzayr!" She went to the assembly of the tribe of Israel, which included a son of 'Uzayr's, who was one hundred and twenty-eight years old, and his grandsons who were old men. She said, "People! By Allah, this is 'Uzayr!" His son went to him with the people and said, "My father had a black mole like the crescent moon between his shoulders." He saw it and knew that it was 'Uzayr.'

It is said that when he came he found that everyone he had known had died. He was a sign for those of his people who were alive since they had heard about his state and were certain. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah said, 'The greatest sign is in him being made to die for this period and then brought to life after that. His entire business is a sign throughout time and there is no need to specify which of the details are correct.'

#### **Look at the bones — how We raise them up and clothe them in flesh.'**

'Raise them up' is read as *nunshizuhā* by the Kufans and Ibn 'Āmir and as *nunshiruhā* by everyone else although Abān related from 'Āṣim that it is '*nanshuruḥā*' as did Ibn 'Abbās, al-Ḥasan and Abū Ḥaywah. In either case it means to bring to life. It is known linguistically that Allah brings the dead to life (*anshara*) and they are revived (*nasharū*). Allah says: '*When He wishes, He brings him to life.*' (80:22) It is like a garment being unfolded (*nashara*). The verb is used for being resurrected after death and the noun is *nushūr*. Al-A'shā said:

Until, when people see it, they say,  
'Wonder! The resurrected (*nāshir*) dead!'

It is as if death rolls up the bones and limbs, and revivification and joining the