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| **Date** | Wednesday, June 22, 2016 |
| **Topic** | The Chronologically First revealed chapters of the Qur’an |
| **Part** | Introduction |

Quran was revealed to a person called “Muhammad” (pbuh), with the first few verses revealed at the top of a mountain in a cave known as “***hira***”. *Hira* comes from the Arabic word, *Haraa* which derives from the word *Taharree* which means “research/investigation”. It is said that he (pbuh) would go on and forth to *hira* for two years. The Prophet (pbuh) was wondering on the nature of this universe and the purpose of human existence. It seems that he was reflecting on human existential questions.

From this, I learn that I need to research for myself about my purpose in this existence. But first, **I need to have questions such as existential questions: *Why am I given existence? What am I?***  I also need to come to the understanding that these existential questions cannot be answered by this universe, even if I use my intelligence. This universe seems meaningful and it has messages for us but these messages do not take us beyond this universe. Example: Matter exists, it emits messages, but it does not tell me that it has a Maker who possesses all these messages and their qualities, not found in this universe. (*Sunlight, wind and other elements are meaningful and exciting but they do not point to more than what we see. That is, how they happen to be there and why they are there).*

Analogy: A painter paints a painting and demonstrates its qualities. You admire the painting and wonder about it. Similarly, this universe is wonderful and demonstrates endless qualities (beauty, magnificence, compassion…) and you admire it. It is as if its Creator is always speaking to you through the qualities manifested in the objects. If we do not question the qualities, where they are coming from, how come I experience them, who is the Creator…we do not get the answers (although the Creator is speaking to you through the artwork He is demonstrating in front of our eyes).

**When I question, the answer comes from the One who makes me with the ability to question.** If I start questioning and I do not know the answer, the One who made me must provide the answer. Muhammad (pbuh) was searching in mount *Hira*: “I wonder. How come I wonder and there is no answer? There must be an answer”. How come I have the ability to question and there are no answers? I wonder.” It seems the Prophet was reflecting, contemplating and going on and on looking for answers. If we keep doing this as well (i.e. contemplation), the Creator of this ability to question starts speaking to us. Otherwise, if I do not have questions, the answers in the scripture will not mean anything to me. It would be similar to getting the answer keys of an exam without attempting the questions. Additionally, I should not wait for a particular event to occur (i.e. illness, relationship problem, financial debt, job loss, human aging…) to start questioning the purpose of my existence. That is why ***it is important to reflect on what it means to exist.***

In order to understand the Speech i.e. guidance from the Creator, first thing is to have questions so that when I read the scripture, my questions are answered in a way that I feel satisfied with. Do not confirm the answers blindly. Let’s say you were sleeping/not paying attention in class while the Professor was solving the equation. You later woke up when the professor was writing the answer. Now you just have the answer and you confirm it because the Professor said so. Is it satisfactory to have the answer only? This is not your personal confirmation; you have not verified it for yourself. Thus, imitative religion does not help. **You have to question, attempt to solve the question and verify the answers!**

Quran, by definition says that I am the answer to all human questions because I am the Speech of your Creator to you. This means that my Creator is the One who answers my questions and It is the one that created the universe. ***What about now, who is giving you existence today?*** The same Creator. **That is, today is the act of creation executed by the One who gives existence to every moment.**

***What is creation?*** Creation is revelation of the qualities of its Creator. The pencil is transferring the qualities of its Maker if I am aware that it is made by a conscious Being. If this Being keeps making new pencils, then this Being is disclosing its qualities yet in another way. That is why everyday everything changes. Nothing is static in this universe. When this Being creates, It reveals Its qualities at every moment. The Creator of the universe (the Being) cannot be of the nature of the universe.

Example: Lectern is made of wood. It cannot be wood that made it. The being who operated on the wood gave it different qualities i.e. shape, color, texture etc.

* The Being who gives existence to the universe reveals itself through these qualities.

One should always question what one experiences in creation. Example: It is spring, ***what does it mean?*** It is cold, ***what does it mean?*** You hear an earthquake, ***what does it mean?*** An acquaintance dies, ***what does it mean?***

* The Being continuously discloses Itself so I continuously question the universe.

Thus, **this Being must continuously give answers to my human questions because, It is continuously creating.** It is continuously manifesting Its qualities to give answers to human questions.

With the above understanding, I can easily conclude that **my human questions are renewed at every moment.** **I should always ask questions**: ***Why am I full? Why am I hungry?*** **Anytime that you ask a question, the Being must answer as His communication is continuous. I am the one that needs to realize by keeping my communication receptors open.** The Being must be Absolute and Eternal, *where is it?* If It is the Speaker in the Scriptures, Its qualities of Speech must be Eternal as well. Historically, we know that the Being spoke to some Prophets (Moses, Jesus, Muhammad), so how can it speak to me? We need to reconcile that.

***How can I know that the Speaker (the Being) is speaking to me since I have only a static book in my hand?***

The book (text) maybe static but the meaning of the content of the text must be dynamic, ever alive. The meaning of the Quran speaks to me. That is, **Creator speaks to me and I can understand only when I have questions.**  Text conveys messages to you according to your questioning. Thus, I can seek answers to my questions whenever I ask for it.

* ACTION: I need to turn the *kitaab* (book) into a *khitaab* (discourse)

We usually do not read the discourse; we read the text because we think that it was revealed 1400 years ago to a person called Muhammad, who claims that he is the Messenger of God. What I need to do is to see whether the *kitaab (text)* transfers the meaning (*khitaab*) to me as answers to my questions. But I need to first have questions. Let’s say I have a question now. Then, I check if the book is answering me. The point here is that if I read *mushaaf* as revealed to Muhammad (pbuh) only, as an answer to certain events, then I am not reading the Speech of the Creator. The Creator must have spoken to Muhammad but Muhammad (pbuh) is not the Absolute Speaker; he died fourteen hundred years ago. He cannot answer my questions now.

The Quran continuously speaks to me according to my conditions and its Speaker, God hears my concerns. Just like as It heard a woman’s complaint about her husband (referring to Khaula’s story as mentioned in the Quran), similarly God hears all sorts of human complaints, discussions, gossips, thoughts brewing in my mind because it is my Creator right now. We usually get lost in the event i.e. where did this event happen? What did her husband do to her? Who is Khaula? **God’s speech is a universal message.**  **Khaula’s story is just one event, an example mentioned in the Quran to let me know that my Creator is all-Hearing, all-Seeing (the message).**

***What about the story of Abu Jahal?*** *Who is he? Have I seen him?* No. I need to bring the Speaker’s message through Abu Jahal’s story into my present day condition (21st century, not 1400 years ago).

**We should read verses as the Speech of the Eternal Speaker.** *How?*

* **By presenting your problems directly to your Speaker with the awareness that the text always conveys a universal message applicable to my conditions right now, conveys guidance of my Creator.** **The One who gives me the ability to ask questions about anything and then present my petition to It must answer my questions!**
* Transform the static book🡪 dynamic book, in order to understand that the Eternal Speaker is speaking.
* Find the universal message.

***How do I know the Creator speaks absolutely?***

* Read the text as a live discourse.
* Universe is disclosing/witnessing it.
* 🡪 I will come to realize that the Creator is the Absolute Speaker.

“You (the text) claim to be the Speech of my Creator right now, you must give answers to my questions right now.” We need to synchronize this. The Speaker is the Absolute Creator, the universe is witnessing it. ***Every moment It is conveying a new quality, so why don’t we say that it must give me answers to my questions right now?***

* Because we do not have questions.

***If you keep questioning, then every morning you will wake up amazed with creation wondering why does the sky look different every day?*** The Speaker says: *Wad’duha* (by the dawn): “every moment I create something new. The universe is my witness, I create everything new”. On the contrary if you wake up saying, today is not cloudy. When you read *Wad’duha*, **you are reading a dead script. *Why is that?***

* Because we do not wonder at creation, we do not question or we do certain things just because we are asked to follow religion.
* We have to make the Speech of God present RIGHT NOW!
* **I believe in the discourse means that I can get a new answer every moment based on whatever I wonder about.**
* The Prophet as a messenger must be alive now in my worldview. As a man he is dead but the message of all the Prophets are alive.

When I confirm the act of creation as given existence by Its Creator, I confirm its Speech by testifying the ***shahada***: ***Ashhadu an la ilaha illallahu. Wa ashhadu anna Muhamadan abduhu wa rasuluhu*** (I witness there is nothing in the universe that has the power to give existence to anything but the universe exists and so it must have a Creator + Muhammad (pbuh) is the one who brings the message to me).

That is, message of all Prophets are alive. Muhammad, as a person is dead but its message is alive and **I need to confirm the Messenger after confirming the Message of the Speaker.** ***Ashadu***= I witness now that Muhammad is Allah’s acknowledger and His Messenger. When you make Speech of God alive right now, you declare that the message in the Speech is brought to you by a person, the Messenger.

* Messenger is also confirmed together with the message.

***Lailaha*** (there is nothing in this world which has Divine qualities or the qualities to give existence to anything). As a Conscious Being, I see things are given existence at every moment. Nothing in this universe is the Existence Giver to anything. The One who gives existence to one particle must be the One who gives existence to the whole universe. ***Am I sure about it?*** **THINK:** *Is air giving existence to my life right now?*

Analogy: Building is made of bricks.

* ***Are there bricks in the composition of buildings?*** Yes.
* ***Are the bricks giving existence to the building?*** No. Bricks themselves are dependent on a Conscious Will that prefers the bricks to be there. The order of existence does not change. Structure of existence changes i.e. the One who gives existence has no limit in his power to change the things yet the orderliness is always kept in the universe.

***What is God/Allah?***

I cannot define but can conclude ***illallah*** (there must be something that gives existence which I call God). However I have to go through ***lailaha*** (nothing in the universe has the power to give existence to anything). **I can only define God/Allah as much as I am conscious of *lailaha***: There is nothing in the universe which has the power to give existence to anything but **the whole universe is being given existence** (***illallah***). ***How?*** **It seems to be a mystery, but we need to reflect on it. That is why I search for it!**

If am sure that my cells are not giving existence to my hands but my hands exist. It is exciting and I wonder how that is happening? I have to go beyond the universe; there must be a Conscious Will who gave existence to my hands which cannot be found in the universe.

Go back to defining ***illallah***, as the Quran constructs it: ***Huwa allahu llazee lailaha illa hu.*** Huwa= It (the Source of existence) you are looking for. ***Lailaha illa*** as described above. Hu= my conclusion about It.

***How can I make Messengership alive in my being right now?*** The message is conveyed to me by a person who died but his message is ever present in my being. The *shahada* (as stated above) helps me affirm the message: “Yes, this message has been brought to me by the Messenger and it is carried to me right now as far as I am concerned by the Messenger!”

***Assalamualaika ayyuhannabiyyu***= Peace Be Upon You O Message Bearer. If I confirm the message I get through Muhammad alongside the message, I express my gratitude.

**The Messenger must be alive for me so I can be happy with him.** Just as when you read a book whose author died and are thankful with the author for sharing important lessons, similarly, every time I recite ***shahada***, I am thankful with the fact that Muhammad (pbuh) brought this message to me. As long as I enjoy the message I receive through him, I appreciate the author in the example/Messenger.

Taking *shahada* is a starting point to be inducted into the religion of a believer. However, if you happen to be born into a believer’s family, *have you ever gone through these stages?* Not really. Despair not because we are given endless opportunities to renew our testimony (***shahada)*** which needs to be renewed at every moment.

Questioning period🡪answer🡪I will feel obliged to thank the one who teaches the message to me. **Thus, the one who conveys the message to me is the one who is the messenger of the One who speaks in the book and the book is the Eternal Speech of our Creator.**

* Messenger must be present together with the message he conveyed. This way he is alive for me.
* I am communicating with the Messenger as I receive the message i.e. I am communicating with the Speaker through the Message brought to me by Muhammad (pbuh), the Messenger.

Speaker is the Absolute Speaker. His speech has no time limitations; it’s always alive and fresh as long as I ask questions. Agreeing with the message brought to me by the Messenger means declaring: “I declare peace with you O Message Bearer. I am with you now and I am happy with you”.

After this introduction, we are now ready to read the message of the Creator!