

Revelation 1 – CREATION

(Chapter 96: Surah Al-Alaq: 19 verses)

First Revelation in the Cave of Hira where Prophet Mohammad used to spend hours and days in deep contemplation, meditation, worship and intense conversation with his own soul on human conditions, social norm and beliefs of his time and nature of our existence. First 5 verses were impressed to him by Angel Gabriel (Holy Spirit in the Bible) who appeared on the horizon during an early dawn during the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan, year 610 AD. The angel came nearer and nearer and give him a full embrace and asked to “Read” to which the prophet replied, “I do not know how to read”. This exchange was repeated three time and then the angel revealed these first five verses:

In the name of God, the Most Merciful and the One Who Instill mercy in others

READ in the name of your Sustainer & Cherisher (God) Who creates; creates human being from a clot of blood (*alaq* - fertilized egg)¹; Read in the name of your Cherisher (God) Who is Grand and Most Generous! Who teaches with Pen² and teaches humanity what is yet unknown to mankind³. [verses 1-5]

Beware, Human kind is ever ungrateful, rebellious because he considers himself self-sufficient, whereas his eventual return is back to his Cherisher God.⁴ [verses 6-8]

Have you seen him⁵ who obstructs a servant (of God) in his devotion and prayers? Should he not consider if he (this servant) is on the right path or encourages mindfulness and a sense of responsibility? Has he (this servant) denied the truth and turned his back? Does he not know that God sees? [verses 9-14]

¹ Reproduction – the second creation that comes from love and attachment, the first creation was from dust (elements that came together to start the evolutionary process of which human species are the latest to appear); the third creation will be resurrection (ref: 22:5) on the Day of Gathering back to God. The word “alaq” also implies attachment and love. A tradition from the Prophet: “I (God) loved that I should be known, so I created mankind”

² Pen – instrument for knowledge, language and mechanism to capture and catalog our collective and evolving knowledge, complimented by divine Knowledge transmitted through revelations such as the Qur’an, The Bible, The Torah and continuous stream of divine and human inspirations for and from each generation of humans

³ Unknown – beyond knowledge that evolved with evolutionary process, God gifted specific knowledge for humanity, starting with Adam and Eve (ref. 2-31) – knowledge and working of the universe, the notion of right or wrong, truth or false, good or evil, self-confidence or self-doubt (ref: 95:4-5, 14:1, 5; 33-43; 57:9, Bible (Isaiah 42:16, 1 Peter 2:9), 4:113

⁴ These set of verses to the end was revealed at a later date when many prominent people of his tribes, including his Uncles, such as Abu Jahl started resisting him, mocking him and were putting up barriers to his attempts to express his message and guidance to people to establish truth about their existence and purpose

⁵ This is in reference to Abu Jahl, who was vehemently opposed to his prophethood and teachings – a reference that applies to all who denies the truth and acts against truth and justice in every generation

Surely, if he does not stop, We (God)⁶ will seize him by his forehead as he is lying and is unjust! Let him then call on his associates and We too will summon Our forces. Never follow him but align⁷ with [prostrate to] God and build relationship⁸ with [come closer to] God. [verses 15-19]

It is reported that when the prophet received his first revelations in the cave and encountered Angel Gabriel, he became afraid and was awed by what just happened. He quickly descended the mountain and went home to his wife, Khadija and told her, "Cover me, Cover me". He related to her his experience on the mountain and wondered if his encounter was only a delusion and if he was touched by any evil. Prophet was 40 at the time and had been married for 15 years with his wife who was 15 year older than him. She was a widow prior their marriage and a business woman at a time and in a society which did not even recognize property rights for women and women themselves were considered property of men.

She assured him that his experience must be real and no evil can touch him because he was a man of truth and honor. "Never! By God, God will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your relatives, you speak the truth, you help the poor and the destitute, you treat your guests generously and you help those afflicted by misfortune." Once the prophet was thus comforted and assured, they went to see a cousin of her, Waraqa, an older gentleman of faith and piety and a Christian, who used to write the Bible and the Gospel in Arabic and led a quiet life around Kabah, the house of worship built by Prophet Abraham. They related to him his experience in the Cave to which he replied: "This is the same Namus (Greek nomos – revealed law) that God sent to Moses and the same angel who visited Jesus. I wish I were younger and could live up to the days when your people will drive you out."

Many prophets have been sent between Moses and Jesus but there has been no prophet since Jesus until Mohammad, who is considered the last prophet to be sent by God. At the time of this first revelation, the Byzantine and the Persian empires were in their peak of power and oppression and were fighting for supremacy. Three Catholic Popes - Pope Boniface IV, Pope Adeodatus I and Pope Boniface V reigned Christianity from Rome during the Prophethood of Mohammad. All traces of monotheism (unitarianism) in Christianity were removed from Christian teachings (Catechism) and official conducts and Trinity became the new Christian norm. Hinduism has flourished over Millenia in India and Bhuddist were oppressed and moved out of India to surrounding countries and as far as Afghanistan, Tibet, China, and Korea. Sui Dynasty was in their glory days in China, only to be deposed by Tang Dynasty near the end of Prophet's life. One of the Prophet's early followers – Saad ibn Waqqas who commanded in The Battle of Qadisiyyah and in the conquest of

⁶ In most cases in the Qur'an, when God performs an act for or against humans, individually or collectively, it uses the pronoun "We" as if to include the contributions of Angels and other creations, including humans who carry out such acts, whereas when God makes intimate relationship with his creation, the Qur'an uses the first person "I". (ref: 2:186) or when God indicate direct consequence of ignoring His guidance (ref: 68:44-45, 74:11-15)

⁷ Prostrate – prostration to God makes references to the act of Salah (Islamic prayer) in which one bows and then prostrate. Alignment with God is the real purpose and the intended outcome. It is a practice of the Muslims that when such verses are read or recited, one stops and performs a prostration to honor God at the moment.

⁸ Come closer – by asking us to come close to God is to build and sustain our relationship with God as our Creator and to establish truth and justice in our societies so that each and every human being can fulfil his or her God given potentials unencumbered.

Persia in 636, made a diplomatic sojourn to China in 651 and died there in Ghuanzhou Province. Mayan civilization was flourishing in North America and Aztecs were yet to emerge in South America. America was a land of American Indian. Africa, the gateway of modern homo sapiens were splintered into many tribes of various animistic faith and practices.

This is the context in which the first 5 verses should be considered where God once again reminds humanity of who the Creator is through an illiterate and a shepherd prophet in the harsh environment of barren Makkah, to a tribe in charge of the house of worship established by Abraham and his eldest son Ishmael. In the same breadth God declared the endowment of knowledge and His continued bounty of expanding knowledge to humanity so that we can dig the truth and act with justice. And there is the perpetual cautionary reminder that we all belong to God and to Him is our eventual return – so, act responsibly on this temporal earth and be aligned with God and goodness!