

The Interpretation of a Quran Verse from the Chapter of Jonah

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Abbreviations used throughout this translation include:

PBUH: Peace be upon him/her

PBUT Peace be upon them

PBUHAF Peace upon him and his family

SWT: Praise Him and Exalt Him has been translated as “Almighty”

—Trans.: Footnotes not in the original text but added by the translators.

In the name of God, the Abundantly Merciful, the Intensely Merciful

God Almighty said:

{We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe that there is no god except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit"} Quran Chapter "Jonah" 10:90.

In the name of God, the Abundantly Merciful, the Intensely Merciful

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

May the peace and prayers of God be upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, the Imams and the Mahdis.

O children of Adam, remember Me in your anger and I will remember you in My anger and not destroy you with those I destroy. If you are oppressed, be satisfied with My vengeance, because My vengeance for you is better than you avenging yourself.¹

O God, I am Your weak, poor and oppressed servant, who is satisfied with you taking vengeance on my oppressors for me.

In the name of God, the Abundantly Merciful, the Intensely Merciful

{And indeed, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes when they hear the message, and they say, "Indeed, he is mad." But it is not except a reminder to the peoples} Quran Chapter "The Pen" 68:51-52.

Before explaining the meaning of the verse, I will mention several issues. First, I will begin with a quote from Sarkhi in which he attacked me:

And with that, the claimant has violated reason and the people of reason, knowledge and the people of knowledge, and the sound human being and humanity . . . and this dark and ignorant claimant . . . claims this false, evil and misguided and misleading call . . . the absurdity, foolishness, inconsistency, ignorance and dark thoughts and intellect of the claimant . . . what the claimant has written is extremely ridiculous and shallow, and he is more ridiculous and shallow than you imagine . . . the shallowness of the claimant's thoughts, sickness of mind and deviation of his soul . . . and so on.²

Sarkhi's behavior and the words he wrote are anything but good manners. Any author with

¹ Muhammad Al-Kulayni, *Al-Kafi* (Tehran: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Islamiya, 1944), vol 2, 304, and Al-Nouman Al-Magribi, *Daaim Al-Islam* [Pillars of Islam] (Cairo: Dar Al-Maarif 1965), vol 2, 537.

² Mahmoud Sarkhi is an Iraqi cleric who tried to disprove Ahmed Al-Hasan's claims, but has not provided any evidence in this statement-Trans.

even the least bit of manners would avoid them, let alone someone who claims to be writing an academic response. By God, Sarkhi has reminded me of Ibn Al-Aas who revealed his private part in order to to save himself.³

There is no might or power except in God Almighty. The difference between us is enough [to show the truth], because the words of the mouth come out of the heart's store. In his previously mentioned words, Sarkhi let out the envy that was screaming out of his heart. His envy has added to the evidence of this blessed Yamani call as we, the family of Muhammad^{PBUT}, are the people who are envied. The Almighty said:

{Or do they envy people for what God has given them of His bounty? But we had already given the family of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom and conferred upon them a great kingdom} Quran Chapter "The Women" 4:54.⁴

Second: Sarkhi quoted the following statement from the book *Enlightenments from the Calls of the Messengers*.⁵

Materialistic miracles cannot be a way for the people to believe, because God is not satisfied with purely materialistic faith. Had He accepted it, He would have accepted the faith of Pharaoh after he saw the compelling inexplicable materialistic miracle, the parting of the sea. He saw each side as a great mountain and touched it with his hand, then said {"I believe ..."} Quran, Chapter "Jonah" 10:90.

This was my commentary on the Quranic verse and not a complete interpretation of it, because I was not interpreting the verse at the time. Rather, I had presented it as evidence that faith is not accepted when the miracle is compelling and inexplicable.

My words were clear and only two things can be understood from them regarding the verse from chapter Jonah. First, Pharaoh said "I believe", as in the Quran, after seeing the water of the sea that was like a great towering mountain and touching it with his hands. Second, God did not accept Pharaoh's faith because he was driven to it by the compelling miracle that could not be explained.

However, Sarkhi tried to make the reader think that I claimed Pharaoh said "I believe" only

³ Muawiya said to Amr Ibn Al Aas: ". . . when Ali son of Abu Talib chased you, you threw yourself from your horse and revealed your private part. How did you come to your senses in this situation?" Abdul Hussain Ahmed Al-Amini Al-Najafi, *Al-Ghadeer* (Beruit: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi 1952), vol 2, 163–Trans.

⁴ Abu Abdullah said: "We are the people whom God Almighty obligated you to follow; the spoils of war are for us; the funds are purely for us; we are the ones firmly grounded in knowledge; and we are the ones envied, of whom God Almighty said: {Or do they envy people for what God has given them of His bounty?} Quran Chapter "The Women" 4:54. Al-Kafi vol 1, 186.

⁵ Ahmed Al-Hasan, *Enlightenments from the Calls of the Messengers* (Najaf: Ansar Imam Al-Mahdi Publications 2010), vol 3, part 2, 24.

after seeing the miracle, even though the words after it, which he copied from the *Enlightenments* book, clearly state: “He saw each side as a great mountain *and touched it with his hand.*”

Toward the end of Sarkhi's statement, he also tried to delude the reader into thinking that I said Pharaoh did not follow the Children of Israel. His words are far from being the truth, let alone a scholarly statement.

Third: Sarkhi said:

Due to the importance and gravity of this issue, and in order to illustrate and establish the matter, there is no problem with identifying, highlighting, and confirming the definitive, divine Quranic truth: Pharaoh did not vocalize or say “I believe” when the sea was parted. His utterance and words of “I believe” were not linked to the miracle of the parting of the sea. In other words, the parting of the sea miracle was not the reason, impetus, or driving force that compelled Pharaoh to say “I believe”.

There are two issues that should be noted from these words:

1. Regarding the case that Pharaoh believed simply because he saw the parting of the sea miracle, it is very clear from my words, which Sarkhi quoted, that I did not say this. Perhaps envy blurred Sarkhi's vision, and he didn't read: "and touched it with his hand". God Almighty said: {Or do they envy people for what God has given them of His bounty? But we had already given the family of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom and conferred upon them a great kingdom} Quran Chapter “The Women” 4:45.

2. Sarkhi also said that Pharaoh's words “I believe” were not related to the parting of the sea miracle, and this divine miracle did not compel Pharaoh to say "I believe".

Sarkhi thinks what compelled Pharaoh to say “I believe” was the drowning catching up to him. Sarkhi does not differentiate between "drowning catching up to him" and "the drowning". Had he known the difference between the two, he would have realized that attributing Pharaoh's faith to drowning catching up to him means that the reason for Pharaoh's faith was the parting of the sea miracle. That is, Pharaoh's faith came after touching the two mountains of water that were surrounding him and his soldiers and after he knew for certain that the parting of the sea was real, not magic, which is what he had accused Moses of in the past.

The difference between “drowning catching up to him” and “the drowning” is as follows:

The drowning catching up to Pharaoh means that drowning is closing in on him and reaching him. In other words, the drowning event is coming close to Pharaoh but hasn't occurred yet. Drowning means that the drowning is actually occurring. Do you understand now, Sarkhi, that up to the point of saying "I believe", the drowning had not happened yet, so the only reason remaining for why he said "I believe" was the miracle (the parting of the sea), which he touched with his hand, becoming certain that it was a miracle.

Moreover, what clearly shows that Sarkhi doesn't differentiate between drowning catching up to him and the drowning is that he attributed the faith of Pharaoh to the drowning itself, as he said: "Rather, what compelled him to say 'I believe' was the drowning and drowning catching up to him, and the signs and indications of death."

Here are Sarkhi's questions and how he answered them:

– Did Pharaoh believe before the drowning, or was it before drowning caught up to him?

– Did Pharaoh vocalize and say "I believe" before the drowning, or was it before drowning caught up to him?

– Did Pharaoh believe before the drowning . . . then vocalize and say "I believe" after the drowning?

. . . But we can say that he was oppressive, tyrannical, and unjust even after the drowning caught up to him, remaining with these characteristics and in this condition until he said "I believe" (Note that his words "I believe" came after the drowning caught up to him, or after the drowning started to catch up).

... rather, what compelled him to say "I believe" was the drowning; the drowning catching up to him; and the signs and indications of death.

As is very evident to anyone reading his words, Sarkhi doesn't differentiate between drowning and the drowning catching up to him. Had he differentiated between the two, he would have realized that the drowning catching up happened as soon as Pharaoh and his soldiers descended to the seabed, where water had receded into two towering mountains, but before Pharaoh said "I believe".

As for the drowning, it happened after Pharaoh said "I believe". In other words, Pharaoh's words "I believe" were after the drowning catching up to him but before the drowning.

Fourth: Sarkhi said:

. . . as reasonable, fair readers and just people, please note how Pharaoh's words "I believe" were explained when the claimant mentioned "he said 'I believe'" and explained it on the basis of the parting of the sea and his seeing the miracle and touching it with his hand . . . He described it as compelling and inexplicable. This understanding of the Quranic verses and meanings contradicts the divine certain truth that we have proven. Thus the claimant has contradicted reason and the people of reason, knowledge and the people of knowledge, the just human and humanity, and the Quran, its verses, and essential meanings . . ."

In other words, Sarkhi thinks that the parting of the sea miracle was not compelling and could be explained in the view of Pharaoh, after he saw it and touched the two mountains of water with his hand.

I leave the reader to ask Sarkhi the question he will never find an answer to: how can the parting of the sea miracle be explained from Pharaoh's perspective when only the memory of it was left the moment he touched it with his hand, or the moment he descended to the seabed and found himself between two mountains of water while moving on land from which water had receded into two towering mountains to his right and to his left?!

Fifth: What Sarkhi considers a research paper or a book—as his spokesman said to the media in a response to Ahmed Al-Hasan—consists of nothing but these lines mentioned in the fourth point, which he imagined to be a response. Had he known how to skip the tedious wordiness and vulgar language, he would have shortened to a single line what he imagined to be problem concerning a Quranic verse used as an example in the *Enlightenments* book. Is this (worthless) line being called a book in response to Ahmed Al-Hasan? But there is no harm, for you have inherited the drums of Muawiya and Ibn Al-Aas. As the old saying goes: if you have no shame, do whatever you want.

In any case, Sarkhi and many others before him have misinterpreted the Quranic verse. I will show the mistakes in the interpretation and understanding they hold. The invalidity of their interpretation will be shown by explaining the Quranic verse, as well as mentioning the erroneous possibilities and refuting them.

Interpretation of the Verse from the Chapter of Jonah

The Almighty said: {We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe that there is no god except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit"}⁶ Quran Chapter "Jonah" 10:90.

When did Pharaoh's faith, mentioned in the words of the Almighty, start? {"I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the those who submit"}?

There are several possible answers:

1. Pharaoh's faith occurred when he saw the parting of the sea miracle with his own eyes.
2. Pharaoh's faith occurred after he descended to the seabed to pursue the children of Israel, but before the water engulfed and drowned him.
3. Pharaoh's faith occurred after the water engulfed him and he was drowning in it, but definitely before he died. This possibility is the one that Sarkhi considered to be an absolute Quranic truth. Sarkhi said: ". . . rather, what compelled him to say 'I believe' was the drowning."

Let us subject the three possibilities to scientific scrutiny based on the previously mentioned words of God Almighty, as well as the physics of speaking, or the human utterance of words. The order of discussion of the above possibilities will be the first followed by the third, and then I will return to the second possibility.

The First Possibility: *Pharaoh's faith happened right after seeing the parting of the sea.*

This possibility is incorrect due to the Almighty's saying: {We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity, until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe . . ."}. Pharaoh pursued the children of Israel, that is, seeing the parting was not enough for him. Instead, he commanded his soldiers to descend to the seabed and pursue the Children of Israel {and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny}.

⁶ Those who submit = Muslims. A Muslim is one who submits—Trans.

The Third Possibility: *Pharaoh's faith occurred after the water engulfed him and he was drowning, but definitely before he died.*

This possibility, which Sarkhi imagined to be valid, is incorrect. Human speech in this material world requires the utterance of words, and this can't be achieved without the medium of vocalization, which is air. Given that water had engulfed Pharaoh, the medium for vocalizing—air—was absent, so he couldn't say anything.

It should also be noted that the water surrounding Pharaoh was like two towering mountains: {Then We inspired to Moses, "Strike the sea with your staff," and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain} Quran Chapter "The Poets" 26:63. You can imagine how long it would take for two great towering mountains to collapse and completely fill an area that is the height of the tallest human and the width of no more than several meters. Those who have studied physics know that the water pressure at the base of the two water mountains would be tremendous. Consequently, when the two towering mountains had collapsed, the water wouldn't have taken minutes or even seconds to engulf Pharaoh and his soldiers. In fact, it would take less than a very small fraction of a second, which is not enough for a human to utter a few letters. So how can it be imagined that he vocalized more than one sentence {He said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the those who submit"}.

We must also note Pharaoh's circumstances when the water engulfed him. He was weighed down by the iron armor he was wearing, as was the case with his soldiers because they had come out to fight the children of Israel. We cannot imagine that he floated or swam in order to get the chance to say anything because the iron armor would have stopped him from doing that. Since he was weighed down by iron armor, the extraction of his body after his demise from underwater was a sign from God. This is because the iron is supposed to keep him on the seabed {So today We will save you in body that you may be a sign to those who succeed you. And indeed, many among the people, of Our signs, are oblivious} Quran Chapter "Jonah" 10:92.

In that case, no rational person can imagine that after the collapse of two towering mountains and being covered in water, Pharaoh would say: {he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the those who submit"}.

Also confirming the invalidity of this possibility, is the fact that God Almighty did not say: "until he drowned, he said 'I believe'". Rather, He said: {until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe"}}, which means drowning was close to him in proximity and not that he was actually drowning. Pharaoh became convinced that the drowning had caught up to him by touching the mountain of water and sensing the reality of his situation, all the while moving on the ground of the seabed between two mountains of water surrounding him.

To further clarify the difference between drowning catching up to him and drowning, pay

attention to this verse. The Almighty said: {And when the two companies saw one another, the companions of Moses said, "Indeed, we have been caught up to!"} Quran Chapter "The Poets" 26:61.

They confirm that Pharaoh and his soldiers have caught up to them {"Indeed, we have been caught up to!"}. But Pharaoh and his soldiers had only gotten close to them to the extent that they saw each other, without reaching their location.

The Second Possibility: *Pharaoh's faith occurred after he descended to the seabed to pursue the children of Israel, but before the water engulfed and drowned him.*

This is correct. Pharaoh and his soldiers had gone down to the seabed and pursued the children of Israel. But when they pursued the children of Israel, God commanded the wind to hit the surface of the water, causing some of it to collapse on Pharaoh and his soldiers. He noticed that he was moving between two mountains of water which could engulf him at any moment. He touched the mountains of water with his hand, and the signs that he and his soldiers would perish became clear when he realized this miracle was a compelling one, and it couldn't be explained as being magic or anything else. At this point, {he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit"}.

Faith has ranks. The first is: attestation. These words of Pharaoh were attestation, and no one can deny that since the Almighty of the heavens and the earth narrated it in His holy book. After mentioning the words, the Almighty confirmed them with His saying: {Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?} Quran Chapter "Jonah" 10:91

In other words, you believe now after the compelling miracle drove you to do so, but before this you refused to believe {And you had disobeyed [Him] before}. Also, in a way that any person will understand, why would Pharaoh say "I believe" unless he wanted God to save him in this temporal world and in the hereafter? Or at least, as some people have understood, in this temporal world only and specifically from the drowning? How can he hope for God Almighty to save him without believing that He exists?

Pharaoh's faith (attestation) cannot be denied under any circumstances. Actually, the Imams have confirmed his faith (attestation), which did not help him, in several religious accounts. In *Wasail Al-Shia* [The Means of Access for the Shia], it has been narrated on the authority of Musa Ibn Jafar^{PBUH}: ". . . have you not heard that God says: {until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit"} God did not accept his faith and said, {"Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?"}"}⁷

⁷ Muhammad Al-Hurr Al-Amili, *Wasail Al-Shia* [The Means of Access for the Shia] (Beirut: Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1983), vol 16, 9.

In fact, at the beginning of Moses^{PBUH} dispatch to Pharaoh (may God curse him), God Almighty pointed out that he will remember and fear, though this remembrance and fear of God did not help him since it was due to a compelling miracle that drove him to faith (attestation).

[In a religious account] narrated by Muhammad son of Umara, through his father, through Sufyan son of Saeed, he said: "I have heard from Abu Abdullah Jafar son of Muhammad Al-Sadiq^{PBUH}—I swear he was truthful as he was called . . ." ⁸ Sufyan said: "I said to him: Son of the Messenger of God, is it possible that God, the Mighty and Majestic, gives his servants hope of something but it doesn't happen?" He said, "No." I said, "Then how did God, the Mighty and Majestic, say to Moses and Aaron^{PBUT} {perhaps he will remember or fear [God]}, when he knew that Pharaoh wouldn't remember or fear?" He said, "Pharaoh remembered and feared, but at the time he saw the punishment, when faith did not benefit him. Haven't you heard the Almighty's saying: {until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit"}. God the Mighty and Majestic did not accept his faith and He said: {Now? And you had disobeyed before and were of the corrupters? * Today We will save you in body that you may be a sign to those who succeed you}. He said, "We will cast you on a plateau of land that you may be a sign and a lesson for those who succeed you." ⁹

The punishment that Pharaoh saw was mentioned by Imam al-Kazim^{PBUH} , who said: "It did not befall him. Until the moment he said, 'I believe . . .' the punishment had not befallen him." It was the compelling miracle that drove him to believe, it was the two mountains of water surrounding him. Pharaoh caught on that he would perish, once they collapsed: {until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe"}.

Had it not been for Pharaoh's touching of the compelling miracle, which drove him to believe, God Almighty would have accepted his faith, removed the punishment from him, and let him out of the sea in safety. At the very least He would have just accepted his faith, for God Almighty accepts repentance from a person until the last moment of his life.

We should also note that Pharaoh had listened to Moses^{PBUH} and accepted debating Moses^{PBUH} regarding what he^{PBUH} came with from God Almighty. So Pharaoh is a lot less evil than the pharaohs and tyrants of this age, may God curse them and humiliate them in this world and the hereafter.

{Moses said, "O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds [Who

⁸ This is referring to one of the Imam's^{PBUH} titles *Al-Sadiq*, meaning "The Truthful"—Trans.

⁹ Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ali Al-Sadooq, *Maani Al-Akhbar* [The Meanings of the Narratives] (Qom: Muasasat Al-Nashr Al-Islami 1960), 385.

is] obligated not to say about God except the truth. I have come to you with clear evidence from your Lord, so send with me the Children of Israel." * [Pharaoh] said, "If you have come with a sign, then bring it forth, if you should be of the truthful." * So Moses threw his staff, and suddenly it was a serpent, manifest. * And he drew out his hand; thereupon it was white [with radiance] for the observers. * Said the eminent among the people of Pharaoh, "Indeed, this is a learned magician * Who wants to expel you from your land [through magic], so what do you instruct?" * They said, "Postpone [the matter of] him and his brother and send among the cities gatherers * Who will bring you every learned magician"} Quran Chapter "The Heights" 7:104-112.

Not accepting repentance, faith, or the acknowledgement of the guardianship of the guardian and Proof (*Hujjah*) of God over His creation at the time of a compelling, inexplicable miracle, such as worldly punishment, is mentioned in the Quran. It is mentioned not only in regards to the faith of Pharaoh and not accepting his faith, but also in several other places. Here are several examples:

{Do they [then] wait for anything except that the angels should come to them or your Lord should come or that there come some of the signs of your Lord? The Day that some of the signs of your Lord will come no soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned some good through its faith. Say, "Wait. Indeed, we [also] wait"} Quran Chapter "The Cattle" 6:158.

{Say, [O Muhammad], "On the Day of Conquest the faith of those who had disbelieved will not benefit them, nor will they be reprieved"} Quran Chapter "The Prostration" 32:29.

{And when they saw Our punishment, they said," We believe in God alone and disbelieve in that which we used to associate with Him" * But never did their faith benefit them once they saw Our punishment. [It is] the established way of God which has preceded among His servants. And the disbelievers thereupon lost [all]} Quran Chapter "The Forgiver" 84-85.

The question here is: Why is it that {no soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned through its faith some good. Say, "Wait. Indeed, we [also] wait"} Quran Chapter "The Cattle" 6:158, whereas it is stated in religious accounts that God accepts a servant's repentance until he sees [death] with his own eyes.

Abu Abdullah^{PBUH} said that the Messenger of God^{PBUHAF} said, "God will accept the repentance of whoever repents a year before their death." Then he said, "A year is too much. God will

accept the repentance of whoever repents a month before their death.” Then he said, “A month is too much. God will accept the repentance of whoever repents a week before their death.” Then he said, “A week is too much. God will accept the repentance of whoever repents a day before their death.” Then he said, “A day is too much. God will accept the repentance of whoever repents before they see it [death] with their own eyes.”¹⁰

In a religious account narrated by Muawiya ibn Wahab: “There was an old man among the opposers. His nephew presented the Guardianship (of Ahl al-Bayt) to him at the time of his death and he acknowledged it. Then he breathed his last and died. We went to visit Abu Abdullah^{PBUH} and Ali Ibn al-Sarri told him what happened. He^{PBUH} said: “He is a man from the people of paradise.” Ali Ibn al-Sarri said to him, ‘He only knew about that in his last hour!’ He^{PBUH} said: “What do you want from him? By God, he has entered paradise.”¹¹

Al-Sadooq said: Al-Sadiq^{PBUH} was asked about the saying of God Almighty: {But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until when death comes to one of them, he says, “Indeed, I have repented now”}. He^{PBUH} said: “This is if he saw something from the hereafter.”¹²

The answer to the previous question is clear and can be found in the above verse itself. The Almighty said: { . . . the Day that some of the signs of your Lord will come no soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned through its faith some good. Say, “Wait. Indeed, we [also] wait”} Quran Chapter “The Cattle” 6:158.

When will the time be that: {No soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned through its faith some good. Say, “Wait. Indeed, we [also] wait”}??

The answer is: {The Day that some of the signs of your Lord will come}.

It is now clear that with the coming of certain Divine signs, namely some miracles, faith will be of no benefit. The truth is that it is not accepted because it is compulsion, driving to faith and surrendering to fact rather than faith, resigning oneself, and submission. This is because these miracles are compelling and inexplicable ones. As for the other Divine miracles and signs, faith is accepted even after they appear, because they leave room for believing in the unseen. Both the staff of Moses^{PBUH} and his white hand could be explained away by those who attempted to,

¹⁰ Al-Kulayni, *Al-Kafi* [The Sufficient Book], vol 2, 44, and Al-Hurr Al-Amili, *Wasail Al-Shia* [The Means of Access for the Shia] The Family of the House vol 16, 87.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ali Al-Sadooq, *Man Laa Yahduruhu Alfaqih* [For the One Who is Missing the Scholar] (Qom: Manshorat Jamaat Al-Mudariseen fil Hawza Al-Ilmiya 1983), vol 1, 133, and Al-Hurr Al-Amili, *Wasail Al-Shia* [The Means of Access for the Shia] The Family of the House vol 16, 89.

even though Moses had bested the magicians. {They said, "[They are but] two works of magic supporting each other, and indeed we are, in both, disbelievers"} Quran Chapter "The Stories" 28:48, and also Pharaoh said: { . . .Indeed, he is your master who has taught you magic. . . } Chapter "Ta Ha" 20:71, and "The Poets" 26:49. Thus, there was room left for faith in the unseen with the coming of the miracle.

But when Pharaoh believed while he was between two mountains of water, there was no room left for faith in the unseen. It was 100% material faith (attestation) due to the compelling power he saw that split the sea into two halves. He didn't just see it with his eyes such that it could be called magic, but he also went down to the seabed and touched the two mountains of water with his hand. Therefore, this miracle could not be explained by Pharaoh while he was in that position of knowing about and being convinced of it. He stood in the middle of the sea at a loss and could only find faith and attestation to save him. But Pharaoh's faith was not accepted, because it was 100% materialistic faith and attestation, and God only accepts faith in the unseen.

{Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them . . .} Quran Chapter "The Cow" 2:3.

{Who fear their Lord unseen, while they are of the Hour apprehensive} Quran Chapter "The Prophets" 21:49.

{You can only warn those who fear their Lord unseen} Quran Chapter "The Originator" 35:18.

{You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him glad tidings of forgiveness and noble reward} Quran Chapter "Ya Sin" 36:11.

{You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him glad tidings of forgiveness and noble reward} Quran Chapter "Ya Sin" 36:11.

{Who feared the Most Merciful unseen and came with a heart returning} Quran Chapter "Qaf" 50: 33.

{We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that God may make evident those who support Him and His messengers in the unseen. Indeed, God is Powerful and Exalted in Might} Quran Chapter "The Iron" 57: 25.

{Indeed, those who fear their Lord unseen will have forgiveness and great reward} Quran Chapter “The Sovereignty” 67: 12.

It will be beneficial here to quote several lines written by the hand of this servant, in need of the mercy of his Lord, from the book *Striving, the Door to Paradise* in regards to the confusion about miracles:

.....

I will discuss just one aspect of miracles that supports the prophets, due to its importance and the obliviousness of people regarding it, which is: the confusion about miracles and their purpose.

People know about one of the miracles of Moses^{PBUH}, the staff that turned into a serpent, which occurred at a time when magic was widespread. One of Jesus^{PBUH} miracles was healing the sick at a time when medicine was widespread. One of Muhammad's^{PBUHAF} miracles was the Quran at a time when eloquence was widespread. At this point, a person ignorant of the truth would say the reason for the similarity of the miracle to what is widespread at the time is to just outdo the magic, medicine, and eloquence to establish the miracle. But the truth hidden from the people, though mentioned in the Quran, is that the materialistic miracle appears as such to confuse those who know nothing but the material. This is because God Almighty is not satisfied with faith being materialistic, rather it must be faith in the unseen:

– {Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them} Quran Chapter “The Cow” 2:3.

– {You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him glad tidings of forgiveness and noble reward} Quran Chapter “Ya Sin” 36:11.

– {Who feared the Most Merciful unseen and came with a heart returning [in repentance]} Quran Chapter “Qaf” 50:33.

– {We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that God may make evident those who support Him and His messengers in the unseen. Indeed, God is Powerful and Exalted in Might} Quran Chapter “The Iron” 57:25.

Faith in the unseen is required and God Almighty wants it. A miracle sent by the Almighty must leave something for faith in the unseen, that is why it will have some confusion in it. Hence, most of the time it is similar to what's widespread at the time it is sent. {And if We had made him an angel, We would have made him [appear as] a man, and We would have covered them with that in which they cover themselves} Quran Chapter "The Cattle" 6:9.

Materialistic people and those who know nothing but the material find an excuse for their failure in the similarity: {But when the truth came to them from Us, they said, "Why was he not given like that which was given to Moses?" Did those not disbelieve in that which was given to Moses before? They said, "[They are but] two works of magic that support each other and indeed we are, in both, disbelievers"} Quran Chapter "The Stories" 28:48.

Similarity became an excuse for them to say: {[They are but] two works of magic that support each other} and {indeed we are, in both, disbelievers.}. In describing a hypocrite, the Prince of Believers^{PBUH} said: ". . . he uses similarity as an excuse for his mistakes".¹³

On the other hand, if the miracle is compelling and it has no similarity then there isn't any room left for faith in the unseen, and it becomes coercion and compulsion to faith. This isn't faith or submission. It is surrender, which is unsatisfactory, and God does not want or accept it: {We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until when the drowning caught up to him, he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the those who submit"} Quran 10:90. Pharaoh believes and submits, or let's say he surrenders, before he dies, but God is not satisfied and does not accept this faith and submission. God Almighty responds to him with this reply {Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?} Quran Chapter "Jonah" 10:91.

This is because it is faith as a result of a compelling miracle—one that doesn't leave those who know only this material world any room to explain it or doubt those believing it. Accordingly, there's no room left for the unseen that God

¹³ After hearing Ammar Ibn Yaser debate with Mughira Ibn Shuba, the Prince of Believers (Ali Ibn Abu Talib)^{PBUH} said: "Ammar, let him be. He only understands from religion what gets him closer to the temporal world. He has deliberately confused himself in order to use similarities as an excuse for his mistakes." *Nahj Al-Balaghah* [Peak of Eloquence] - Explained by Muhammad Abudah (Beruit: Dar Al-Marifa 1991) vol 4, 95.

wants us to believe in and to believe through. At this level, faith is not accepted because it is coercion and compulsion, not faith {Do they [then] wait for anything except that the angels should come to them or your Lord should come or that there come some of the signs of your Lord? The Day that some of the signs of your Lord will come, no soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned through its faith some good. Say, "Wait. Indeed, we [also] wait"} Quran Chapter "The Cattle" 6:158, and {Say, [O Muhammad], "On the Day of Conquest the belief of those who had disbelieved will not benefit them, nor will they be reprieved"} Quran Chapter "The Prostration" 32:29.

Had God wanted to coerce and compel people to faith, He would have sent compelling miracles with the Prophets that leave no room for anyone to say: {[They are but] two works of magic supporting each other} or {"[The revelation is but] a mixture of false dreams; rather, he has invented it; rather, he is a poet. So let him bring us a sign just as the previous [messengers] were sent [with miracles]."} Quran Chapter "The Poets" 21:5. God Almighty said: {And had your Lord willed, those on the earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, will you compel the people in order that they become believers?} Chapter "Jonah". God Almighty also said: {And if their aversion is difficult for you, then if you are able to seek a tunnel into the earth or a stairway into the sky to bring them a sign, [then do so]. But if God had willed, He would have united them upon guidance. So never be of the ignorant} "The Cattle" 6:35.

Praise be to God who is satisfied with faith in the unseen, and has made faith within and through the unseen. And He is not satisfied with material faith, nor has He made it within or through the material. This is in order to differentiate the people of living hearts and sharp discernment from those of blurred vision and sealed hearts . . . ¹⁴

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

I ask God Almighty to guide those who (have) read these few words, and to give them

¹⁴ Ahmed Al-Hasan, *Al-Jihad Bab Al-Jannah* [Striving, the Door to Paradise] (Qom: Al-Mahdi Publications, 2010), 47 (Arabic).

knowledge of the truth and the (success) to support it. He is my supporter, and He supports the righteous.

Ahmed Al-Hasan

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