

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Maryam

Often I think to myself, what is it about the Quran that makes me love it so much. Today after reading Surah Maryam I have come to the conclusion that Quran makes us believe in the Ultimate power and authority of Allah in such a way that it enables us to see beyond the predictability of cause and effect. Although Allah has made this universe in such a way that for everything there is a logical and physical reasoning but at the same time Allah has also made miracles happen which make us realize the truth that Allah is not dependent on these laws to create anything. Again and again we find in the Quran such examples which make us "see" this power He has over everything so that the closer we come towards Him with love and submission, the more belief we have in our hopes and dreams turning into reality. The idea of having Allah as our friend and guide is so irresistibly delightful that it makes us return to Quran again and again for that silent meeting and communication with the Lord.

This is what Surah Maryam is all about.....the power of Allah's creation and the humility and submission of His chosen people. One of them was the Prophet Zakaria (a.s) who prays to Allah in his old age for a child so that he may carry on his mission of spreading Allah's message. Look at the humility and gratitude in his words as he calls his Lord:

إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا {3}

When he called upon his Lord in a low voice,

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا {4}

He said: My Lord! surely my bones are weakened and grey hair have spread on my head, and, my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee:

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا {5}

And surely I fear my cousins after me, and my wife is barren, therefore grant me from Thyself an heir,

At the end of his "duaa" he prays that Allah might be well pleased with his offspring. Just think what we pray and want for our children. A good life, a good education, a good job and a happy well settled family life.....that's it. Our list ends here without us ever worrying whether Allah is pleased with them or not. But Allah's prophets were always conscious of this, so he calls out:

..... {6} وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا

..... and make him, my Lord, one in whom Thou art well pleased.

Why does Allah mention this act of "duaa"? He could have simply given Zakaria (a.s) what he wanted. So why is duaa important? Making "duaa" to Allah is not just a ritual; rather it is a connection between Man and Allah. It strengthens a person's faith in Allah's power and makes him see his own helplessness. Therefore a strong bond of intimacy is created which dispels all negative thoughts and gives hope and clarity of mind. On the other hand we see that by turning away from religion and spirituality, more and more people, even children, are falling prey to psychological disorders, depression being one of the most common. That is why In Islam Praying to Allah has been termed as the essence of Ibaadah. And it has been made very easy for us. We can make a "duaa" any time, anywhere, sitting, standing or lying.....Allah is all the time listening and responding to our requests.

And the best part is when our duaa is accepted. It fills us with joy and wonder that how a seemingly impossible thing has happened and it increases our faith and love for our Lord. As we see in the case of Zakaria (a.s) that when Allah tells him:

يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَى لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا {7}

O Zakariya! surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be Yahya: We have not made before anyone his equal.

He asks Allah with joy and disbelief:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا

{8}

He said: O my Lord! How can I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age?

And here Allah tells him as well as the whole mankind that such "miracles" are not difficult for Allah. Nothing can stop Him from giving a person what he desires and only He has the power to create out of nothing:

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا {9}

He said: So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing.

Thus Allah bestowed on him a son, Yahya (a.s) with all the qualities that were most desired and pleasing to His Lord. Allah says:

يَا يَحْيَى خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا {12}

O Yahya! take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child

وَحَنَانًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا {13}

And tenderness from Us and purity, and he was one who guarded (against evil),

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا {14}

And dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient.

And now Allah tells us another story.....that of another chosen person of Allah: Maryam (a.s) This is a beautiful story of a woman who by her life-long chastity and submission to Allah, became a symbol of purity and goodness for all times to come. Allah gave her the miracle of a son, without a father and thus made them both a sign of His supreme authority over the order of things. If He could create Adam (a.s) with clay, without mother OR father, could give Zakaria (a.s) a son in such an old age with his wife being barren then why could He not create another human being without a father? So when the angel Jibraeel (a.s) appeared before Maryam (a.s) he gave her the glad tidings of a son:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا {19}

He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I will give you a pure boy.

Naturally she was stunned, so she asked:

قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا {20}

She said: How can I have a boy when no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?

Here again we find almost a similar reassurance that Zakaria got:

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا
مَّقْضِيًّا {21}

He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.

Now imagine how a woman, who spent her whole life in chastity and obedience to Allah, must have endured the hardship of having her reputation at stake, added to the physical pain of childbirth. So she calls out in her agony:

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا
مَّنْسِيًّا {23}

And the throes (of childbirth) compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten!

Look at how Allah takes care of her even in her loneliness and despair:

فَنَادَاهَا مِن تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكَ تَحْتِكَ سَرِيًّا {24}

Then (Jibrael) called out to her from beneath her: Grieve not; surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you;

وَهَزِيَّ إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا {25}

And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates:

She is also told not to say anything to anybody when they will accuse her. So when she enters upon her people carrying a child they start blaming her:

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا {27}

And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: O Maryam! surely you have done a strange thing.

يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا {28}

O sister of Haroun! your father was not a bad man, nor, was your mother an unchaste woman.

Just imagine her calm determination and trust in Allah that instead of defending herself she quietly pointed towards her baby, and by Allah's will the infant spoke up, the most beautiful words of the Quran that seem to shine on the page:

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا {30}

He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet;

And see how Allah honors him:

ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ {34}

Such is Isa, son of Marium; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute.

This beautiful story touches my heart every time I read it and makes me firm in my belief that when we suffer for Allah's sake, but continue in our obedience towards Him with patience and perseverance, Allah will defend us from such sources that we can't even imagine. Therefore neither agony nor fear of humiliation should make us disregard Allah's pleasure. If Allah is pleased with us then we don't need anything else. Because He is the owner of everything. There is none equal besides Him. He doesn't need any helper or any son:

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ سُبْحَانَهُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ {35}

It beseems not Allah that He should take to Himself a son, glory to be Him; when He has decreed a matter He only says to it "Be," and it is.

The Quran has recorded the words spoken by Jesus himself:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ {36}

And surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him; this is the right path.

This is TAUHEED, the essence of the teachings of all the prophets of Allah but as people turned away from the correct scriptures they formulated their own versions and created several gods in place of the one and only ALLAH.

And now we come to the prophet whom Allah has called his friend, Ibrahim (a.s) who was the son of an idol maker and yet he searched for the one true God, amid a whole system of polytheism. Allah gave him His knowledge and he in turn sacrificed all his life towards submission to Allah. In the following Ayat the Quran records the way he did "dawah" (calling to the right way) to his father. Notice how gentle and respectful he is:

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا {42}

When he said to his father; O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least:

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا {43}

O my father! truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me, I will guide you on a right path:

Allah is teaching us that Islam should be spread with wisdom and decency. Our attitude is the most important factor which might attract or repel a person. So we see here that even though the response he gets from his father is far from gentle, he maintains his composure.

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهَ لِلْأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا {46}

He said: Do you reject my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly stone you, and leave me for a time.

Imagine yourself in his place and feel how these words must have hurt him, yet he is so Allah conscious that even now he is not filled with any negative emotion. He says:

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا {47}

He said: Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me:

Allah says he rewarded him with sons who were prophets themselves:

فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا {49}

So when he withdrew from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We gave to him Ishaq and Yaqoub, and each one of them We made a prophet.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا {50}

And We granted to them of Our mercy, and We left (behind them) a truthful mention of eminence for them.

Last but not least, is the reminder of Musa (a.s) whose tales Allah has recorded the most in the Quran and each time I read them I wish for more ! Here Allah says:

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا {51}

And mention Musa in the Book; surely he was one purified, and he was a messenger, a prophet.

We notice that each prophet has something special and Musa's specialty is that Allah talked to him:

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا {52}

And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw nigh, holding communion (with Us).

After this Allah has also mentioned Ismaeel (a.s)

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا {54}

And mention Ismail in the Book; surely he was truthful in (his) promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet.

and Idrees (a.s)

وَأذْكَرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَدِيقًا نَبِيًّا {56}

And mention Idris in the Book; surely he was a truthful man, a prophet,

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا {57}

And We raised him high in Heaven.

Now why have all these prophets been discussed here? Obviously Allah wants us to learn something from each one of them. Allah is also teaching us that when He chooses someone to be His messenger then Allah makes him go through various trials in order to strengthen him, and to raise his status in the Paradise. The test here is to be constant in patience and goodness. The higher the trials, the greater are the rewards of this world and more so in the next. The belief in the Hereafter is the driving force behind every good deed. Yet there are those who don't believe in the life after death, on the basis of their limited knowledge. Allah says:

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَأَنْدَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا {66}

And says man: What! when I am dead shall I truly be brought forth alive?

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا {67}

Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing?

Again Allah reminds us of our creation. Each human being who comes in this world is a sign of the miraculous power of Allah. Whoever believes in the guidance of Quran gets further enlightenment from Allah as a reward:

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ مَرَدًّا {76}

And Allah increases in guidance those who go aright; and ever-abiding good works are with your Lord best in recompense and best in yielding fruit.

And definitely the treatment of the pious and the wrong doers cannot be the same on the Day of Judgment. As we see in the following Ayat the contrast is obvious:

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا {85}

The day on which We will gather those who guard (against evil) to the Beneficent Allah to receive honors

{86} وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا

And We will drive the guilty to hell thirsty

So we should all be worrying about our status in Allah's eyes. Because ignorance from Quran leads us to arrogance and we think we are going to rule the world forever. Allah tells us that there have been far greater people who have lived before us yet their material progress could not prevent them from becoming part of the earth itself.

The last words of this brilliant surah leave one stupefied with awe:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

{98}

And how many a generation have We destroyed before them! Do you see any one of them or hear a sound of them?

After such a question what answer do we have? Lets wake up to the reality of our powerlessness and become powerful by acknowledging the power of Allah. Total submission is the real strength in this world and a hope for everlasting success and happiness in the Hereafter.