

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## Surah Al-Naml

Bismi-Allah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim

When we say something in the same way again and again without pondering over the meaning, then gradually we become forgetful of its importance. Perhaps it's a human weakness to take familiar things for granted and we need to view things from different angles to really appreciate their value. That is why we need to come out of our stereotype impression that we have about the verses of the Quran. The very first line of the Quran, which is the opening of all the Surahs (except one), is the most commonly read line because we are supposed to say it before doing anything. But today having written it in this way, I have realized that even when I read it before starting something, I am too engrossed in my thoughts of the work at hand to remember that I am calling to Allah and I need not be afraid of failure because He will help me. Although the very effect of reading Bismillah should be to fill us with an energy and confidence in the knowledge that we are not alone and Allah who is entirely merciful and beneficent is right with us and He will help us and give us protection from all that might stop us in our way. But our fears are dispelled only if we really understand what we are saying and whose name are we calling and whose aid we are seeking. How amazing are the words of Allah and how kind He is that He keeps reminding us about these little things, which we normally tend to put aside in our minds, thinking that we already know them. That is why, the reading of Quran should be included in our daily schedule, and we should do it with the sincere intention of understanding the spirit of Allah's message to us. Imagine that if just an opening line can fill us with so much energy and conviction

then how much more can we gain out of the rest of The Quran in terms of inner peace and fulfillment. Surah An-Naml begins with the very same message, that this Book is guidance and good news for the believers.

طس تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ {1}

**Ta Sin! These are the verses of the Quran and the Book that makes (things) clear**

هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ {2}

**A guidance and good news for the believers,**

If you think about it, just the assurance of being on the right track fills you with hope and happiness because then you know that if you keep going, you will reach your final destination. Therefore when a believer gets the revelation of the Quran on his heart, it makes him optimistic that if he acts upon this guidance then inshaAllah one day he will reach the Paradise. It makes me think that in today's world of anxieties and depressions, Quran is the ultimate anti-depressant that can make us come out of our endless dissatisfaction with everything.

To be able to benefit from the message of Allah, one needs to be free of arrogance. Otherwise if you think yourself to be the best judge then all your intellect is spent in trying to prove the message to be worthless or insignificant or inapplicable. This is what happened with Pharaoh who saw the signs of Allah, brought by Musa (a.s) but he refused to accept it.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ {13}

**So when Our clear signs came to them, they said: This is clear enchantment.**

Allah knows that Pharaoh had recognized the truth in his heart but he could not admit it because he was too arrogant and full of his own sense of superiority to admit Allah's superiority over all things:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ  
عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ {14}

**And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their (inner) selves had been convinced of them; consider, then how was the end of the mischief-makers.**

But it doesn't mean that all successful people are arrogant. There are some who fear Allah even while they have been blessed with an abundance of everything. So Allah gives the example of His two prophets, who were kings as well, Dawood (a.s) and his son Sulaiman (a.s) who had been bestowed with extraordinary resources and power; and best of all they had been given extraordinary knowledge, so that they remained conscious of the fact that all the credit of their superior status goes to Allah:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى  
كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ {15}

**And certainly We gave knowledge to Dawood and Sulaiman, and they both said: Praise is to Allah, Who has favored us over many of His believing servants.**

Next follows the fascinating story of Sulaiman (a.s) in which we find that he was blessed with unusual powers and authority. Yet it didn't prevent him from doing "shukr" (expressing gratitude) to Allah. Read the following words and imagine what it must have been like for a man to communicate with and rule over the birds and animals, as well as the Jinn and people too:

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُودَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَّمْنَا مِنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْتَيْنَا  
مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ {16}

And Sulaiman was Dawood's heir, and he said: O men! We have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given all things; most surely this is manifest grace.

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ  
{17}

And his hosts of the jinn and the men and the birds were gathered to him, and they were formed into groups.

One expects such a ruler to be arrogant and ruthless, yet we see that Once in an expedition, when he came upon a valley of ants, and listened to an ant warning her fellow creatures, to protect themselves from Sulaiman and his army, he smiled.....

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي  
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي  
بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ {19}

So he smiled, amused at her speech, and said: My Lord! enable me that I should be grateful for your favor which you have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good deeds such as you are pleased with, and admit me, by your mercy, into your servants, the good ones.

Sulaiman (a.s)'s smile shows that the grandeur of his kingdom had not made him callous or insensitive, rather he takes notice of such a tiny little ant and is amused by her words. And his prayer teaches us that softness of heart leads to gratitude, and gratitude protects you from arrogance. Look at how conscious he is of the fact that gratitude should be expressed not only in words but also by doing such good deeds which might please Allah. And the last thing that he asks is the company of the righteous

people, which is also a mercy of Allah because when we are among good people, then our heart automatically reaches out towards goodness and humility. What a beautifully comprehensive prayer for those who really want to add meaning to their lives.

In the next verses Allah is giving us another example of a ruler, the Queen of Sheba, who ruled over the most wealthy and well-known people in the history of Arabia. But despite being a powerful woman, she had a cool temperament and a logical mind which was receptive to truth.

A hoopoe of Sulaiman (a.s)'s army reported to him with information about the Queen of Sheba:

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ  
{23}

**Surely I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne:**

The hoopoe realizes that the description of worldly success is only half the picture. So he puts forth his observations about their religion too:

وَجَدْتُهُمْ وَاقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمْ  
الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ {24}

**I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah, and the Shaitan has made their deeds fair-seeming to them and thus turned them from the way, so they are not guided.**

Compare it with our own attitude. Do we ever give a thought to the fact that however successful a person or a nation might be, their ultimate success lies only in the obedience of Allah. Do we ever feel sorry for such people who are known for their worldly

advancements and power, yet they are heading towards a terrible end in the hereafter?

Well Sulaiman (a.s) decides to investigate into the truth of the matter so he tells the hoopoe to deliver a letter to the Queen.

When she received it she informed her courtiers:

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ {29}

She said: O chiefs! Surely an honorable letter has been delivered to me

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ {30}

Surely it is from Sulaiman, and surely it is in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful;

أَلَّا تَعْلَمُوا عَلَيَّ وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ {31}

Saying: exalt not yourselves against me and come to me in submission.

Notice how brief and comprehensive it is. Sulaiman (a.s) has come straight to the point. In such a few words the letter conveyed to the people who is it from and that it is not for any personal ambition but it is for the sake of Allah and what is being required of them.

The queen immediately recognizes that this is not something to take lightly but should be given serious consideration. So she asks the chiefs:

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى

تَشْهَدُونَ {32}

She said: O chiefs! Give me advice respecting my affair: I never decide an affair until you are in my presence.

They assured her that they had mighty power and great ability for war, so she could choose and command what she thought was best. She decided to send an envoy to Sulaiman with some

presents to see what his reaction would be. But when Sulaiman saw the presents he was not impressed or overwhelmed by this show of wealth. So he said:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَانِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَاكُمْ  
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ {36}

So when they came to Sulaiman, he said: What! Will you help me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Nay, you are exultant because of your present;

ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَا أَذِلَّةً  
وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ {37}

Go back to them, so we will most certainly come to them with hosts which they shall have no power to oppose, and we will most certainly expel them therefrom in abasement, and they shall be in a state of ignominy.

Later on when Sulaiman heard that the Queen of Sheba was coming in submission, he asked his chiefs, which of them could bring to him, her throne. So after one audacious Jinn offered to bring it in a short time, another one who had knowledge of the Scripture said that he could bring it to him within the blink of an eye:

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ  
طَرْفُكَ

One who had the knowledge of the Book said: I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.

And so the next moment Sulaiman (a.s) found the throne placed before him.

What did he say? Was he proud of his power? Imagine for a moment such a technology being invented today with which people



could bring things from thousands of miles in just a moment, the whole world would be boasting of how we have invented this and the media would go crazy over the "advancement" made by MAN, but there would not be one single thought or word to remember that it is in fact Allah who has given us the resources and the intelligence too, so we can make progress like this.

Look at how Sulaiman (a.s) remembered Allah's power at all times:

فَلَمَّا رآهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي أَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ  
أَكْفُرُ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ

{40}

Then when he saw it placed beside him, he said: This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honored.

He also understands that Allah's special blessings on a person are not merely a sign of Allah's love but they are actually a test through which a man might prove himself thankful and gain eternal rewards in both the worlds. Gratitude is like a shield to protect us from anxieties and it gives us peace of mind, enabling us to live a meaningful, productive life.

Next he orders some changes to be made in the Queen's throne so as to disguise it before she came. He wanted to see whether she was able to recognize the truth.

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرُ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ

{41}

He said: Alter her throne for her, we will see whether she follows the right way or is she of those who are not guided.



In this, is an important lesson for us to remember that when we want to convey Allah's message to someone we should first find out the intellectual level of that person, to be able to reach out to the person's heart in a more effective way.

When the Queen arrived, she was asked if her throne was like that. She didn't jump to conclusions; rather she calmly observed that it looked as if it might be her own. She also admitted that she and her people had recognized that Sulaiman was not only a king but a Prophet of Allah, so they had already become Muslims.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ {42}

**So when she came, it was said: Is your throne like this? She said: It is as if were the same, and we were given the knowledge before it, and we were submissive.**

The next Ayat is very important, as it tells us that her reason for leading a life of "shirk" was because she had been born and brought up in a polytheistic environment. It was not her personal choice.

It makes me think of the countless people out there going towards an unknown end, living a life without Allah's remembrance just because the message has not reached them. Whose duty is it? Why are the Muslims so content in their lives without giving it any thought? Have they forgotten their role of being the chosen nation?

Allah is reminding us here:

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ {43}

**And what she worshipped besides Allah prevented her, surely she was of an unbelieving people.**

And then Sulaiman (a.s) asks her to enter his palace and when she does so, she mistook the crystal clear floor to be a pool of water:

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَن سَاقِيهَا

It was said to her: Enter the palace; but when she saw it she deemed it to be a great expanse of water, and uncovered her shins[to wade through].

Sulaiman (a.s) explains:

قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّن قَوَارِيرَ

He said: Surely it is a palace [whose floor is] made smooth with glass.

Now her heart truly submits to the glory of Allah so she exclaimed:

قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

{44}

She said: My Lord! surely I have been unjust to myself, and I submit with Sulaiman to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Next Allah reminds us that there have been many Prophets who were rejected by their people but it was the people's own loss. Allah has given here the example of Saleh (a.s) and Lut (a.s) both of them tried to bring their people out of their wrong beliefs but they persisted in their crimes. Allah says you can see how they were destroyed:

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةٌ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

{52}

**So those are their houses fallen down because they were unjust, most surely there is a sign in this for a people who know.**

And the righteous ones were saved:

**{53}** وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

**And We delivered those who believed and who guarded (against evil).**

So the important thing to remember is that the truth prevails and falsehood has to come to an end sooner or later however awesome it might seem on the surface. So all those who commit themselves to spreading Allah's message in the world should be firm in their belief that Allah is always on their side even if things get difficult for them at times.

All praise is for Allah and peace be upon His chosen people. This is the prayer that Allah is teaching us here:

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا  
يُشْرِكُونَ **{59}**

**Say: Praise be to Allah and peace be on His servants whom He has chosen: is Allah better, or what they associate (with Him)?**

And in the same verse is a question to all those who associate partners with Allah, whether in the form of statues, or the stars, or people, dead or alive, or their wealth and property, or their sacred homes and their lifestyles. Allah asks them, how can they even compare anything with Him? Do they have any quality like Allah?

Just look at the tone of these questions that have been put forth, one after the other:

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ  
حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ مَّا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِ  
هُم قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ {60}

**Nay, He Who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down for you water from the cloud; then We cause to grow thereby beautiful gardens; it is not possible for you that you should make the trees thereof to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Nay! they are people who deviate.**

Have we ever wondered who has made the earth so stable despite the extraordinary speed of its two-way motion, one around its axis and the other around the sun? and who has made the rivers and the mountains?

أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِي  
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَكْثَرُ هُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
{61}

**Or, Who made the earth a stable ground, and made in it rivers, and raised on it mountains and placed between the two seas a barrier. Is there a god with Allah? Nay! most of them do not know!**

And who is the one who answers the prayer of the desperate heart?

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ  
الْأَرْضِ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ {62}

**Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and He will make you successors in the earth. Is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you mind!**

The questions continue and make us look around ourselves with a new angle. Do we think there can be anyone other than Allah to do all this? If not then how can we worship any other thing? How can we compromise on our duty towards Allah for the sake of other people or things? What is misleading us? Allah says it is because of our misconceptions about the day of Judgment:

بَلِ ادَّارِكْ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا  
عَمُونَ {66}

**Nay, their knowledge respecting the hereafter is slight and hasty; nay, they are in doubt about it; nay, they are quite blind to it**

And also because we are not grateful:

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ {73}

**And surely your Lord is the Lord of grace to men, but most of them are not grateful.**

But we should remember that we will not go on enjoying our life in this world forever:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ {78}

**Surely your Lord will judge between them by his judgment, and He is the Mighty, the knowing.**

To deny these clear warnings is a serious crime. Allah says:

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ  
{83}

**And on the day when We will gather from every nation a party from among those who rejected Our communications, then they shall be formed into groups.**

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُم بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِطُوا بِهَا عَلِمًا أَمْ آذًا كُنْتُمْ  
تَعْمَلُونَ {84}

**Until when they come, He will say: Did you reject My communications while you had no comprehensive knowledge of them? Or what was it that you did?**

Do we realize how dangerous it is to say things about the Quran or Allah about which we don't have any knowledge? But we see that this is exactly what is happening nowadays. Turn on any talk show, about religious issues and people can be seen talking passionately, each trying to convince others about his own philosophy of life and trying to prove that this is what Islam is all about. Allah says such people will be so horrified when they will face the torment that they won't be able to speak:

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ {85}

**And the word shall come to pass against them because they were unjust, so they shall not speak.**

That will really be a frightening day but only those who have done good deeds will be in peace:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ {89}

**Whoever brings good, he shall have better than it; and they shall be secure from terror on the day.**

But look at the terrible fate of the wrongdoers:

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وَجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ  
تَعْمَلُونَ {90}

**And whoever brings evil, these shall be thrown down on their faces into the fire; shall you be rewarded (for) aught except what you did?**

So we should all glorify Allah for sending us this Quran and giving us the means to read it and understand it. Soon the time will come when we shall all see with our eyes the things that we are being warned about. Let's turn to Allah before that happens because by that time it will be too late.

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا  
تَعْمَلُونَ {93}

**And say: Praise be to Allah, He will show you His signs so that you shall recognize them; nor is your Lord heedless of what you do.**

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