With the Noble Quran: Resolving the Greatest Problem for Mankind

(Translated)

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Allah (swt) says: ﴿كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتاً فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ **"How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were dead and He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then He will give you life again, and then to Him you will be returned?"** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 28].

The noble verse begins with ﴿كَيْفَ﴾ **"how,"** an interrogative noun (ism istifhaam اسم استفهام) concerning a state of affairs. This interrogation is not literal, for the essence of interrogation is that the questioner asks about something unknown, and there is nothing Allah (swt) does not know that would necessitate asking. Therefore, the interrogation shifts to expressing astonishment at the state of the disbelievers and rebuking them for their heinous action. This heinous action, which is disbelief (kufr), is a Shariah description for everyone who does not believe in Allah (swt), does not believe in what Allah (swt) has required belief in, or sets up a partner with Allah. Thus, it includes the worshippers of idols and the worshippers of anything other than Allah (swt), everyone who denies a pillar of the pillars of Iman, the Jews who said 'Uzayr is the son of Allah, the Christians who said the Messiah is the son of Allah—Exalted is Allah far above what they say, supremely exalted—and everyone to whom the message of Muhammad (saw) has reached and who has not believed in him from among the disbelievers, polytheists, and followers of previous messages.

As for ﴿وَكُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتاً﴾ **"And you were dead"** – the waw (و) conjunction is a circumstantial waw (waw al-haal), and there is an implied "qad" (قد past tense marker) because the verb following it is in the past tense. So the implied meaning is "and you had been dead." The clause after the waw is a circumstantial clause, and the clauses that follow it are conjoined to it, thus they are also circumstantial clauses. The meaning is: this is your state; death, then He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then He will give you life, then you will return to Allah – and you disbelieve in Allah (swt) who does that to you?

As for ﴿فَأَحْيَاكُمْ﴾ **"Then He gave you life"** – here the conjunction "fa" (ف so) is used, which indicates sequence and immediate succession. So, death comes first, followed by life-giving, and life-giving occurs for the dead; it follows it directly, meaning immediately after it. Therefore, the conjunction "fa" is used here.

As for ﴿ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ﴾ **"Then He causes you to die"** – here the conjunction ﴿ثُمَّ﴾ **"thumma (then)"** is used, which evidences sequence and delay. So, the death intended here occurs after the life-giving, and due to the existence of a time period between the life-giving and the death—even if short, so that the description of life is realized—the conjunction "thumma" was used.

As for ﴿ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ﴾ **"Then He gives you life"** – here the conjunction ﴿ثُمَّ﴾ **"thumma (then)"** is also used because the life-giving intended here comes after a period of time from the death that preceded it, which is in the Barzakh (intermediate state), as we will explain later. This period of time is long for those who died earlier and short for those who died later, so the conjunction "thumma" was appropriate. And this life-giving is the Resurrection and the Rising.

As for ﴿ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ **"Then to Him you will be returned"** – Here, the conjunction ﴿ثُمَّ﴾ **"thumma (then)"** connects the return of people to Allah (swt) to the final giving of life, and this will occur on the Day of Resurrection and Rising, the Day of Judgment. Given the length of that day as described by Allah (swt) and the many severe horrors it contains, the use of the conjunction "thumma," which implies sequence and a lapse of time, was appropriate. The adverbial phrase of place ﴿إليه﴾ **"to Him"** was placed before the verb ﴿تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ **"you will be returned"** for two reasons: First, because the adverbial phrase contains the pronoun referring back to Allah (swt), so it deserved precedence over the verb to glorify Allah (swt). Second, to conclude the ayah with a rhyme that harmonizes with the rhymes of the preceding ayaat. The passive voice verb in the present tense ﴿تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ **"you will be returned"** was assigned in the plural case, with the conjunction of waw (و) referring back to the addressed party, who are the disbelievers addressed at the beginning of the ayah by His saying ﴿كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ﴾ **"How can you disbelieve."** The unstated Doer of the action (الفاعلُ الذي لم يُسَمّ) is Allah (swt); He is not mentioned because the evidencing indicates Him, and so that the passive voice verb evidences the compulsion of the disbelievers to return to Allah (swt), so that He may hold them accountable and punish them for their disbelief. This passivity applies to the five verbs following the verb ﴿تَكْفُرُونَ﴾ **"you disbelieve,"** which are (كنتم، وأحياكم، ويميتكم، ويحييكم، وتُرجَعون) "you were, He gave you life, He causes you to die, He will give you life, and you are returned." All of these actions fall within the sphere that controls man. The action in all of them happens to him against his will, and he possesses no power to reject, repel, or alter it.

And the verbs (أحياكم، يُميتُكم، يُحييكم) "He gave you life, He causes you to die, He will give you life" are all attributed to Allah (swt) because He (swt) is the Doer (الفاعل Al-Fa'il) of all that, just as the Doer of the return is Allah (swt). Additionally, these four verbs, including the return, are augmented with the hamza which conveyed transitivity to a single maf'ool (مفعول object), which is the disbelievers who were addressed at the beginning of the ayah.

The Quranic interpreters (mufasirun) differed regarding the number of deaths and resurrections, with several opinions. The view we favor is that there are two deaths and two lives, as is definitively established and clearly indicated in this ayah. The first death occurs before creation, before the soul is breathed into the fetus. After the soul is breathed in, the first life begins. When the appointed term in this world ends, the second death begins, and the second life occurs at the time of resurrection and being raised on the Day of Judgment. This view is confirmed in other ayaat, including His (swt) saying, quoting the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment: ﴿قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتَّنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ﴾ **"They**

will say, 'Our Lord, You have made us die twice and You have given us life twice'..." [TMQ Surah Ghafir: 11].

This noble ayah is among the early ayaat in Surah Al-Baqarah. It was preceded by the ayah in which Allah (swt) commands the worship of Allah alone, which is His saying (swt): ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾ **"O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous"** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 21]. It was followed by ayaat about the creation of Aadam (as), then the command of Allah (swt) to the angels to prostrate to Aadam (as), then the descent of Aadam (as) and his wife to the earth, and the beginning of human life to receive the commands and prohibitions of Allah (swt); as He (swt) said: ﴿قُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ مِنْهَا جَمِيعاً فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾ **"We said, 'Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. * But those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those will be the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally'"** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 38-39].

All these ayaat resolved the major problem of humanity and answered its three questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? And what is the ultimate destiny? These are questions that press upon a person driven by the instinct of religiosity (gharizat at-tadayyun), and these questions continue to disturb a person's peace until they are answered with the correct answer that convinces the mind, conforms to the innate disposition (fitrah), and affirms what is in the instinct of religiosity regarding the need to venerate the Creator, the Organizer (al-Mudabbir) (swt). This resolution is achieved through a comprehensive idea (fikrah kulliyah) about the universe, man, and life, and their relationship to what preceded them and their relationship to what comes after them. This comprehensive idea is contained in the noble ayah we focused on, along with the ayaat that preceded and followed it. Its essence is that what human sensation perceives of the universe, life, and man is created by Allah (swt), who created them from nothingness. Allah (swt) sent the Messengers (as) to people to convey to them the commands and prohibitions of Allah (swt), and that Allah (swt) will cause people to die then resurrect them on the Day of Judgment to hold them accountable for the commands and prohibitions, resulting either in Paradise or in the Fire.

And resolving this major problem resolves the rest of the problems within a person. Moreover, this resolution is the intellectual foundation upon which all ideas about life are built; it represents his perspective on life and intellectually guides the human being. It gives him the purpose of his existence in this worldly life, which is to attain the Pleasure of Allah (swt), and it provides him with a scale and criteria for thought, self, and conduct, so he is happy in this world and succeeds in the Hereafter with Paradise: ﴿فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ **"So whoever follows My guidance – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve"** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 38], ﴿فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى﴾ **"So whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray in this world nor suffer in the Hereafter"** [TMQ Surah Ta-Ha: 123].