

Al-A'la [The Most High] **Makkan Period**

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[1] Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High,

[2] Who created all things and fashioned them in good proportion; ¹

[3] Who determined² and guided them, ³

[4] Who brought forth the pasture,

[5] and then made it into a blackish straw.

1. God created everything in the Universe from the earth to the heavens and endowed each with right proportion and balance, giving it the best possible form.

*2. "... your Lord ... determined," that is, before creating anything God decided what its role would be in the world, and what would be its size, its shape, its qualities, and its location. God also decided the means and opportunities that should be provided to it for its existence, sustenance and function; how it should come into existence, how long it should remain in existence, and how, after accomplishing its task, its existence should come to an end. This scheme in its totality is known in Arabic as **taqdir**, meaning God's determination of all things.*

3. That is, God did not simply bring a thing into existence and then abandon it. On the contrary, God informed each created object what the mode of its function would be.

[6] We shall make you recite and then you will not forget, ⁴

[7] except what Allah should wish. ⁵ He knows all that is manifest and all that is hidden.

[8] We shall ease you to follow the way of Ease.

[9] So render good counsel if good counsel will avail. ⁶

[10] He who fears (Allah) shall heed it,

[11] but the wretched will turn away from it.

[12] He will be cast into the Great Fire.

[13] Then he will neither die in it, nor live.

4. This refers to the early period of revelation. At times the Prophet (peace be on him) would start rehearsing the verses while Gabriel was in the process of communicating them to him.

He did so lest he might forget them. For this reason God asked him not to rehearse the Revelation while it was being communicated to him; he should rather do no more than listen attentively. He was assured that after a portion of revelation had been made, God would make him recite it after which he would then never forget.

5. True, if the Prophet (peace be on him) had committed the entire Qur'an to memory this was not because of his own capacity to do so. It was rather because of God's special grace and succour. For, if God had so wanted, He could have erased from the Prophet's memory, either wholly or partially, whatever had been revealed to him.

6. This is to stress that God does not want to place any undue burden on the Prophet (peace be on him) as regards preaching the Message of the True Faith. He does not want him to embark on such impossible tasks as making the deaf hear and the blind see. Instead, God wants the Prophet (peace be on him) to engage in the relatively easier task of giving good counsel to those who, in his opinion, are capable of benefiting from it. However, he need not pursue those whom he knows, on the basis of personal experience, to be incapable of benefiting from good counsel.

[14] He who purified himself shall prosper,

[15] remembering his Lord's name and praying.

[16] No; but you prefer the present life,

[17] whereas the Hereafter is better and more enduring.

[18] This, indeed, was in the ancient Scrolls,

[19] the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses.