

Sura 31: Luqman (Luqman)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 19:

1. *Alif. Lam. Mim.*
2. *These are verses of the wise Book,*
3. *A guide and a mercy to the doers of good;*
4. *Those who establish regular prayer, and pay the poor-due and who have certitude in the Hereafter.*
5. *These are truly guided by their Lord and these are the successful.*
6. *But there are, among people those who take instead frivolous discourse to lead astray from God's path without knowledge, and to take it for a mockery; these shall suffer a humiliating torment.*
7. *And when Our revelations are recited to him he turns away in arrogance as if he did not hear them, as if there were a deafness in his ears. So give him tidings of a painful torment.*
8. *For those who believe and do good deeds, there will be gardens of bliss,*
9. *Wherein they will abide. It is a promise of God in truth. He is the Eminent, the Wise.*
10. *He created the heavens without any supports that you can see; He set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and He scattered through it beasts of all kinds. We sent down rain from the sky, and produced on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs.*
11. *This is the creation of God. Now show me what those (you worship) beside Him have created. Indeed, the wrongdoers are in manifest error.*
12. *And verily We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, "Give thanks to God; whosoever gives thanks, he gives thanks for (the good of) his own soul. And whosoever is ungrateful, then surely God is Self-Sufficient, Praised."*
13. *And (remember) when Luqman said to his son, when he was exhorting him, "My son, do not associate partners with God. Associating partners (with God) is a tremendous wrong."*
14. *And We have enjoined on humankind (to be good) to his parents. His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final destination.*
15. *But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them; yet keep their company in this life with kindness, and follow the way of those who turn to me (in repentance). In the end you will return to Me, and I will tell you about all that you did.*
16. *"My son," (said Luqman), "Even if it were the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, God will bring it forth. God is Subtle, Totally-Aware.*
17. *My son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and persevere whatever may befall you. Indeed, these acts require resolve.*

18. *And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor walk proudly on earth. God does not love the arrogant, the boastful;*
19. *Be modest in your bearing and lower your voice. The most repulsive of all voices is the voice of the ass.” (31: 1 -19)*

The Quran came to address the initial natural disposition of the human being in a way that is appropriate to that disposition. It is God who revealed the Quran and it is He who instilled this natural disposition in the human being. God instilled in the initial natural disposition of the human being the basic truth of the Oneness of God, the Creator. So, human beings should recognize this truth by instinct. It was essential that God should reveal the Quran to remind people of the basic truth because physical desires and worldly lusts may cloud the initial natural disposition instilled in people and prevent them from realizing the basic truth.

This Sura which was revealed in Mecca is a model of the Quranic style in addressing the human heart aiming at uncovering the basic truth that God had implanted in the psyche of the human being at the time of its creation. The focus of all the Suras of the Quran revealed in Mecca was the belief in the oneness of God the Creator. This concept was dealt with using different approaches in the various Suras of the Meccan Quran.

The Sura starts with three letters of the Arabic Alphabet, “*Alif. Lam. Mim,*” to emphasize the fact that the Quran was composed using letters of the Arabic Alphabet. The Quran is described as a Book of wisdom, “*These are verses of the wise Book,*” which is appropriate and in congruence with the theme of the Sura. In addition, such a description gives the impression that it is a living Book that means what it says and uses, full of wisdom, and it provides guidance and mercy, “*A guide and a mercy to the doers of good.*” The verse defines the doers of good, “*Those who establish regular prayer, and pay the poor-due and who have certitude in the Hereafter.*” They perform prayers in the best way they can and at the prescribed times. This way prayer provides a strong link between the heart of the believer and God, allowing the believer to enjoy the sweetness of being close to God. Paying the poor-due supports the believer’s soul in its struggle against the natural human tendency to be stingy. It provides the foundation for a society that looks after its members who are less fortunate and enhances the feeling of mutual responsibility among its members. The certainty of the inevitability of the Day of the Resurrection is the guarantee that the human heart will be ever vigilant in its struggle against temptation and will always remain conscious of God, in secret and in public. It helps the believer to reach the status of excellence. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, “*Excellence is to serve God as if He were visible to you, because even if you are not able to see God, He most definitely sees you.*” The Quran becomes a source of guidance and mercy for the doers of good, “*These are truly guided by their Lord and these are the successful.*” Those who are guided are indeed the successful ones because God will make their path to success clear and easy. They will be protected against any temptation to deviate from this straight path.

On the other hand, there are those who are not guided, “*But there are, among people those who take instead frivolous discourse to lead astray from God's path without knowledge, and to take it for a mockery; these shall suffer a humiliating torment. And when Our revelations are recited to him he turns away in arrogance as if he did not hear them, as if there were a deafness in his*

ears. So give him tidings of a painful torment.” The verses speak of people who spend their precious time and their wealth to compose false and baseless arguments to mislead people away from the straight path. These people base their arguments on bad intentions rather than wisdom or knowledge. They simply want to lead people astray. They use mockery to attract people to their side. Those will suffer a humiliating torment. They behave arrogantly when they are reminded of God’s revelations; they turn away as if they were deaf. Quran responds to their mockery with a mockery of its own: they are given the tidings of painful torment.

The reward for the believers is detailed, *“For those who believe and do good deeds, there will be gardens of bliss, wherein they will abide. It is a promise of God in truth. He is the Eminent, the Wise.”* The Quran always links the reward to the belief and good deeds. Islam does not consider belief to be a truth that resides in the heart without practical consequences. Belief is the foundation for the actions, deeds, and behavior of the believer. Those who believed and their actions and deeds reflected their belief will have a great reward: infinite life in the gardens of bliss. This is God’s promise and God never breaks His promise. God’s promise is an expression of His bounty that He bestows on His servants. God does not need His servants because He is the Eminent, the Wise.

This tremendous universe is a witness of the Eminence and Wisdom of God. There is no doubt that God is the Creator of this amazing universe, *“He created the heavens without any supports that you can see; He set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and He scattered through it beasts of all kinds. We sent down rain from the sky, and produced on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs.”* We look at the sky and see the stars and the huge planets floating in space without any visible supports. This is an amazing scene. No one can see this scene without being filled with awe. The verse then moves from the huge universe to the tiny earth where we see the mountains. These mountains keep the earth well balanced. God’s creatures which live on earth represent one of the amazing miracles. The existence of life on earth is a secret that no one has been able to fathom till now, even in its most primitive and simple forms, let alone the huge intricate forms of life. Sending down rain from the sky is another cosmic phenomenon that we watch every day but we don’t stop and reflect upon it. The cycle of water in the universe and on earth is a well-controlled phenomenon which is necessary for the maintenance of life on earth. Another miracle that the verse states is the fact that plants were created in pairs which has been proven as a scientific fact.

This is God’s creation, *“This is the creation of God. Now show me what those (you worship) beside Him have created. Indeed, the wrongdoers are in manifest error.”* The verse poses a challenge to the disbelievers, a challenge that they were unable to meet. Hence they deserve the description, *“Indeed, the wrongdoers are in manifest error.”*

The following verses deal with a new theme. Using a story telling style the Quran discusses the principles of expressing gratitude to God and the accountability of humankind, *“And verily We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, ‘Give thanks to God; whosoever gives thanks, he gives thanks for (the good of) his own soul. And whosoever is ungrateful, then surely God is Self-Sufficient,*

Praised.’” The verse indirectly exhorts the believers to follow Luqman’s suit and express their gratitude to God, stating that expressing gratitude to God is beneficial to the human being in the first place. This is followed by a statement of the belief in the Oneness of God, “*And (remember) when Luqman said to his son, when he was exhorting him, ‘My son, do not associate partners with God. Associating partners (with God) is a tremendous wrong.’*” This is a fair advice because a father is always interested in the welfare of his son. Luqman also describes associating partners with God as the worst kind of wrongdoing. This is the same message that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought to his people.

The verses then address the relationship between the children and their parents, “*And We have enjoined on humankind (to be good) to his parents. His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final destination.*” The Quran has repeatedly commanded the children to treat their parents with kindness, but it rarely reminded the parents of being kind to their children. The only cases that this was done was in the context of denouncing the pre-Islamic habit of infanticide. It shows that the kindness of parents towards their children is implanted in the initial natural disposition which God instilled in the human beings. There is no need to advise parents to be kind to their children because they work hard to raise their children. They willingly and happily sacrifice to bring up their children. It is the children who should express their gratitude to God first then to their parents. This is followed by a reminder that everyone will ultimately return to God to be accountable for their deeds. However, the relationship between the believers and God is more important than the relationship between the believers and their parents. So, if the parents try to sway the believer away from the straight path, then they should not be obeyed, “*But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them.*” But that does not mean that the believers would treat their parents unkindly, even in this case, “*Yet keep their company in this life with kindness, and follow the way of those who turn to me (in repentance). In the end you will return to Me, and I will tell you about all that you did.*”

The principle of accountability is dealt with in the next verse, “*My son,*” (said Luqman), “*Even if it were the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, God will bring it forth. God is Subtle, Totally-Aware.*” The verse illustrates the power of God and His vast knowledge. Even a tiny seed of mustard that is lodged somewhere in a rock which may be in heaven or on earth is accounted for in God’s knowledge. Then the advice continues, “*My son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and persevere whatever may befall you. Indeed, these acts require resolve.*” These are the planned steps: the belief in God, the consciousness of God, the confidence in His fairness, and the fear of His punishment; then comes the commands to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, to establish prayer, and to persevere when adversity strikes. These steps require great resolve. The advice continues, “*And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor walk proudly on earth. God does not love the arrogant, the boastful; be modest in your bearing and lower your voice. The most repulsive of all voices is the voice of the ass.*” The advice condemns boasting and behaving arrogantly and encourages walking and speaking with modesty and confidence.

Verses 20 to 34:

20. *Do you not see that God has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? Yet there are among people those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a book to enlighten them.*
21. *When they are told to follow the revelation that God has sent down, they say, "We shall follow the ways that we found our fathers following." Even if Satan was inviting them to the torment of the (blazing) Fire?*
22. *And whoever submits himself wholly to God and he is a doer of good, he indeed has taken hold of the most trustworthy handhold. With God rests the outcome of all events.*
23. *And whosoever disbelieves let not his disbelief sadden you (Muhammad). To Us is their return, and We shall tell them what they did. God is aware of what is in the breasts (of people).*
24. *We grant them pleasure for a little while, then We will drive them to severe torment.*
25. *If you ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth? They will certainly say, "God". Say, "Praise be to God." But most of them do not know.*
26. *To God belong all things in heaven and earth. Verily God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.*
27. *And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet the words of God would not be exhausted (in the writing). God is indeed Eminent, Wise.*
28. *And your creation and your resurrection are only as (the creation and the resurrection of) a single soul. God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.*
29. *Do you not see that God merges the night into the day, and He merges the day into the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (to you); each pursues its course till an appointed time; and that God is Totally-Aware of what you do?*
30. *That is because God is the (only) truth, and because whatever else they invoke besides Him is falsehood; and because God is the Most High, the Great.*
31. *Do you not see how the ships glide on the sea by God's Blessing, that He may show you of His signs? Most surely there are signs in this for every steadfast, grateful (heart).*
32. *When a wave covers them like the canopy, they call to God, offering Him sincere devotion. But when He has delivered them safely to land, there are among them those who follow a middle course. None reject Our revelations except those who are deceitful ungrateful.*
33. *People, be conscious of your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a day when a parent will not avail his/her child, nor a child will avail the parent. God's promise is the very truth. Let not the life of this world beguile you, nor let the deceiver beguile you, in regard to God.*
34. *Indeed, with God is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain, and knows that what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. God is Omniscient, Totally-Aware. (31: 20 -34)*

The following verses start a new theme, presenting a proof for the Oneness of God from the cosmic phenomena that are related directly to people's life on earth, "*Do you not see that God*

has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen?” This argument has been repeated often in the Quran using different approaches to evoke the feelings of awe in the hearts of people. The presentation here focuses on the harmony between people’s life on earth and these phenomena. This harmony could not have been the result of a random sequence of events. God created the universe to provide an appropriate environment for the life of human beings on earth. The earth is a small planet in this vast universe and the human being is a tiny creature who lives on earth. It is a blessing from God who created this vast universe to cater for the needs of the life of this tiny creature who lives on this small planet. God bestowed on humankind qualities and traits which enable him to use the resources available in this vast universe. The bounties of God are unlimited. They include the creation of the human being, breathing into him of the spirit of God, and providing him with the energy, tools and ability to benefit from the resources that God made available to him. Yet there are people who do not see these bounties, *“Yet there are among people those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a book to enlighten them.”* This is a strange response that reflects the ingratitude that some people express. Their only excuse is that they follow in the footsteps of their forefathers, *“When they are told to follow the revelation that God has sent down, they say, ‘We shall follow the ways that we found our fathers following.’”* They wanted to follow old rigid traditions without thinking or reflecting on what this means. Islam came to free them from the shackles of these old meaningless traditions. Islam brought them new values but they were obstinate in following old traditions, even though these traditions would lead them to Hellfire, *“Even if Satan was inviting them to the torment of the (blazing) Fire?”*

On the other hand, there are those who fully submit to God and do good deeds; those are the ones who hold tight to the trustworthy handhold, *“And whoever submits himself wholly to God and he is a doer of good, he indeed has taken hold of the most trustworthy handhold. With God rests the outcome of all events.”* This handhold is a strong link between the believer’s heart and his Lord. It provides trust in God and acceptance of His decrees. It fills the believer’s heart with security and tranquility. It supports the believers in facing the tests and trials of life. The trustworthy handhold is the handhold of Islam, the absolute submission to God, and the excellence in behavior.

The following verse was meant to comfort the Prophet (PBUH). It describes the end result of those who disbelieve, *“And whosoever disbelieves let not his disbelief sadden you (Muhammad). To Us is their return, and We shall tell them what they did. God is aware of what is in the breasts (of people). We grant them pleasure for a little while, then We will drive them to severe torment.”* They will be driven forcefully to severe torment from which they have no escape.

The initial natural disposition guides the human being to the truth of the creation, *“If you ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth? They will certainly say, ‘God’. Say, ‘Praise be to God.’ But most of them do not know. To God belong all things in heaven and earth. Verily God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.”* Even though they rejected the message that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought them, they could not but answer the question truthfully. They knew that God is the Creator. So praise God for the truth that He instilled in the initial natural disposition of the human being.

“And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet the words of God would not be exhausted (in the writing). God is indeed Eminent, Wise.” Had they been entrusted with writing down God’s words they would not have been able to exhaust God’s words even if they used all the trees in the world to make pens and an amount of ink that fills the oceans of the earth and seven like them. God is truly Eminent and Wise.

“And your creation and your resurrection are only as (the creation and the resurrection of) a single soul. God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.” Whether God wants to create a single person or many, the process of creation is achieved by a single word, “Be.” The process of creation does not require any effort on the part of God, when He wills something it happens.

“Do you not see that God merges the night into the day, and He merges the day into the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (to you); each pursues its course till an appointed time; and that God is Totally-Aware of what you do?” The alternating scenes of the day and the night are familiar yet they are wonderful scenes. It is a repetitive phenomenon that occurs regularly without any disturbance or change. Only God can create and maintain this system. This phenomenon is related to the cycles of the sun and the moon, another amazing phenomenon. These phenomena testify that, *“God is the (only) truth, and because whatever else they invoke besides Him is falsehood; and because God is the Most High, the Great.”* This universal cosmic system has been created and is maintained by the only truth, God. Everything in the universe is transient except God; He is the Everlasting and He is the Most High, the Great.

The following verses take us on a journey to discover the inner feelings of the human being when faced with danger, *“Do you not see how the ships glide on the sea by God's Blessing, that He may show you of His signs? Most surely there are signs in this for every steadfast, grateful (heart). When a wave covers them like the canopy, they call to God, offering Him sincere devotion. But when He has delivered them safely to land, there are among them those who follow a middle course. None reject Our revelations except those who are deceitful ungrateful.”* God created the laws that allow ships to float on water and to navigate seas. Sea travelers should appreciate these signs of God. When they are faced with a dangerous situation, there is no one to call upon except God. But when He saves them, some of them are lukewarm in their service to God while others are outright ungrateful.

One should remember that the dangers in life are quite tiny when compared with the danger of coming unprepared to the Day of Judgment, *“People, be conscious of your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a day when a parent will not avail his/her child, nor a child will avail the parent. God's promise is the very truth. Let not the life of this world beguile you, nor let the deceiver beguile you, in regard to God.”* No one will be able to help another, all relationships will be useless, even a child-parent relationship. Nothing will benefit people except their deeds. So prepare for that day and let not the pleasures of this world deceive you and make you go astray.

The following verses illustrate the limited knowledge of the human being and the unlimited knowledge of God, *“Indeed, with God is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain, and knows that what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. God is Omniscient, Totally-Aware.”* No mortal has knowledge of when the Day of Judgment will happen. People should be always on the alert, expecting it to happen any time. Rain descends by the will of God according to the laws that God decreed. People could make predictions for rain fall but they cannot create the environmental conditions which are required for rain to fall. God is He who sends down rain because it is He who can create the environmental conditions needed for the rain to fall. Only God knows what are in the wombs. In addition, no one knows what he/she will earn tomorrow. This knowledge covers financial earnings as well as health, happiness, ease, or difficulty. And finally, no soul knows in which place it will die. No one is certain where he/she will die.