

CHAPTER 1

On the Meanings Contained in Allah's Words:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

﴿Indeed, Allah and His Angels send prayers upon the Prophet.
O you who believe! Send prayers and abundant
salutations upon him﴾ [Sūra al-Aḥzāb 33:56]

There are numerous points to be made regarding this verse:

THE PREDICATE AND THE COMMAND IN THIS NOBLE VERSE

Firstly: This noble verse includes a predicate and a command. With regards to the predicate in this noble verse, Allah, the Exalted, informed His servants about the rank of this noble Prophet ﷺ with Him in the Higher Assembly [*al-Mala' al-'Alā*], that those brought nigh send prayers upon him there, and that all of the Angels send prayers upon him. This is only due to his esteem with his Lord and his lofty station and dignified rank in the Higher Assembly.

Then He commanded the inhabitants of the lower world to send prayers and salutations upon him, that there be gathered for him ﷺ lauding, ennoblement, and exaltation from the inhabitants of the two worlds combined: the higher world and the lower world. This predicate begins with the governing particle *inna* (indeed) in order to emphasise what is said and explain its tremendousness. Some of the verifying scholars said that this noble verse contains two predicates, just as the last part of the verse contains two mighty commands. The first predicate concerns the Lord of Might, Allah, the Most High and Exalted, that He sends prayers upon this noble Prophet ﷺ. The second predicate concerns the Angels of Allah, that they send prayers upon this noble Prophet ﷺ.

The estimated meaning [of the verse] is that indeed, Allah sends prayers upon the Prophet, and indeed, the Angels send prayers upon the Prophet, too. The reason for this estimation is due to the different realities of these two prayers: the prayer of Allah and the prayer of the Angels. The prayer of the Angels in no way resembles the prayer of the Lord of the worlds.

As for those who say that His statement *«send prayers upon the Prophet»* includes both Allah and the Angels, then, in their view, this a mode of applying a term of shared designation for each individual, or it is a figurative generality; however, the first view is more emphatic, and people have different ways of understanding this. In both estimations Allah, the Exalted, is announcing to His servants the virtue of this noble Prophet ﷺ, his lofty station, and his dignified rank with Him. Allah ﷻ announces this reality in the Higher Assembly and then reveals it to the celestial world and then to the lower earth, thus causing it to reverberate through the entire cosmos and recording these verses in the pages of all beings, informing that this noble Prophet ﷺ has a mighty and tremendous station with the Lord of the Mighty Throne. That is because Allah, the Exalted, sends prayers upon this Prophet ﷺ as a means of ennobling him, honouring him, preferring him, and magnifying him. And the Angels of Allah, the Exalted, send prayers upon this Prophet ﷺ, being ennobled by sending prayers upon him, seeking blessings, and basking in its lights and plunging into the depths of its secrets.

From this point, when the inhabitants of the lower assembly [the world] heard that, their hearts felt intimacy and their resolves and aspirations were moved, that they may obtain the honour of sending prayers upon this noble Prophet ﷺ, obtain the virtues of sending prayers upon him ﷺ, acquire from its lights, and be filled with its secrets. Their mute-tongue of eloquence expressed the reality of their state: “O Lord! Allow us to be honoured by sending prayers upon this noble Prophet ﷺ by whom the Angels were honoured, sending prayers upon him ﷺ.” Then came the Divine call with His statement *«O»* which is a vocative particle, which is more forceful in capturing attention and receiving the command that follows it. The Exalted said: *«O you who believe! Send prayers and abundant salutations upon him.»*

That is to increase in longing and spiritual experience. When longing heralds spiritual experience the experience is more complete and more acceptable, and it is more delightful and loftier for the person of spiritual taste. May Allah, the Exalted, make us of them!

As is well-known to the scholars of the Arabic language, the word *yā* is primarily used for calling one who is far away. When someone is close by, he is called with the *hamza* ['] or with *ay*, though *yā* may be used to call someone who is close in order to give him the status of someone who is distant. Now, that can either be due to the lofty rank and high position assumed by the caller—an example of this is the Real [Allah] calling His servants, using the word *yā*. Or it could be due to the lofty rank of the one who is called—and an example of this is the statement of the servant: “O Lord.” Or, it could be used to place the one who is close, far away due to his heedlessness and neglect.

There are many calls in the Glorious Qurʾān made with *ayyuhā* that include the *hāʾ* of bringing attention [*hāʾ al-tanbīh*] because that to which Allah, the Exalted, calls His servants includes His commands and prohibitions and His Divine threats and promises. These are weighty matters and tremendous concerns; they [the servants] must be attentively aware of them and incline towards them with their hearts. This state requires that they be called with the most emphatic and strongest of calls. Saying “O man! Fear Allah, the Exalted” is much stronger and much more powerful than saying, for instance, “O man, fear Allah.” Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿O you who believe! Remember Allah﴾; ﴿O you who believe! Fear Allah﴾; and ﴿O you who believe! Send prayers and abundant salutations upon him.﴾

Moreover, linking the call to the attribute of faith ﴿O you who believe!﴾ contains a strong encouragement to comply with the command that comes after the call, for it indicates that it is required by their faith in which they believe and by their religion to which they adhere. So, whoever abandons this command and neglects it has sullied his faith and exposed it to harm. This is comparable to Allah’s statements: ﴿O you who believe! Bow, prostrate, and worship your Lord and perform good actions, that you may be successful﴾; ﴿O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you﴾; and ﴿O you who believe! Seek help with patience and prayer.﴾

In addition, linking the call to the attribute of faith brings attention to the fact that compliance with His command *«send prayers upon him»* is an issue of faith; it is not a favour given to the noble Prophet ﷺ.

The predicate in His statement: *«Indeed, Allah and His Angels send prayers upon the Prophet»* comes in the form of a nominal sentence [jumla ismiyya], indicating permanence and continuity, as is the default meaning in a nominal sentence. What this means is that the prayers of Allah, the Exalted, and the prayers of the Angels upon this noble Prophet ﷺ are forever enduring and unceasingly continuous in forward eternity.

Some of the verifying scholars have said that in consideration of the beginning of this sentence, which is nominal *«Indeed, Allah and His Angels send prayers upon the Prophet»* indicates permanence and continuance, and in consideration of the inability [to constantly do it]—insomuch as it is a verbal sentence—it indicates the continuous prayer of Allah, the Exalted, and His Angels upon the Prophet ﷺ and its constant renewal, time and time again without end or cessation.¹

The mention of his description instead of his name ﷺ

The mention of his description instead of his name ﷺ in the statement of the Most High: *«Indeed, Allah and His Angels send prayers upon the Prophet»* is contrary to the predominant way in which Allah speaks about His Prophets—may prayers and salutations be upon our Prophet and all of them. The mention of his description is in order to indicate the added magnificence, nobility, and lofty rank and position with which Allah has uniquely granted him ﷺ to the exclusion of all others. He emphasized that with *«the»* in His statement *«the Prophet»* in order to point out that he ﷺ is the one who is known with the true description of Prophethood, properly speaking. That is to say, Allah usually addresses His Prophets and Messengers with their names.

Allah said to Ādam ﷺ: *«O Ādam! Reside, you and your wife, in the Garden.»*

¹ See *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī* and others.