

**Al – Alaq**  
the  
(Blood)  
Clot

1. *Iqra' bismi Rabbikallazi khalaq*  
Read: In the name of your Lord who created
2. *Khalaqal insaana min alaq*  
Created man from a clot (of congealed blood)
3. *Iqra wa Rabbukal Akram*  
Read: And your Lord is the Most Bounteous
4. *Allazi allama bil Qalam*  
Who has taught man the use of the pen
5. *Allamal insaana maa lam ya lam*  
Taught man that which he did not know
6. *Kallaa innal insaana la yatgaa*  
No! verily man does transgress all bounds
7. *Ar-ra aahus tagna*  
Whenever he thinks himself (to be) self sufficient
8. *Inna ilaa Rabbikar ruj aa*  
Verily to your Lord is the return (of all things)
9. *Ara aytallazi yanha*  
Have you seen him who prevents?
10. *Abdan izaa salla*  
A servant (of GOD) from praying
11. *Ara ayta in kaana alal Huda*  
Have you considered if he is on the right path?
12. *Aw amara bit Taqwa?*  
Or is concerned with taqwa? (GOD consciousness)
13. *Ara ayta in kazzaba wa tawalla*  
Have you seen if he rejects and turns away from the truth?
14. *Alam ya lam bi annallaaha yaraa*  
Does he not know that ALLAH sees everything?
15. *Kalla la illam yantahi lanasfa am bin naasiyah*  
If he does not crease WE will drag him down by his forelock (forehead)
16. *Naasiyatin kaazibatin khaatiah*  
A lying rebellious forelock
17. *Fal yad u naadiyah*  
Then let him call his henchmen (for help)
18. *Sanad uz zabaaniyah!*  
WE will call out the angels of punishment (to deal with them)
19. *Kallaa laa tuti hu wasjud waqtarib!*  
No! Do not obey him, but prostrate yourself (to ALLAH) and draw closer (to HIM)

The first five ayat or signs of the CREATOR (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala – glory be to HIM) of this surah (chapter) represents the very beginning of the revelation of the Glorious Qur'an. This was the first revelation received by Prophet, Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam – may peace and blessing be on him). The scene, the background and the spiritual vibrations of these first revelations are well known to the reader from the many biographies written on the Prophets or from the tafseer (meaning) of the Glorious Qur'an or even from the annals of history marking the very significant beginning of the revelation of the 114 surah (chapters) of the Glorious Qur'an. As this event marked the beginning of the revelations for approximately 23 years of the Prophethood of the Messenger (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam), we cannot ignore but reflect very briefly on this event, to establish and support the reality that this was one of the greatest episodes in the long history of human existence.

### THE EPISODE

The outstanding human qualities of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) gained him the title of 'Al Ameen' (trustworthy), As Sadiq (the truthful) and the righteous one, for he was always fair and honest in his dealings with all people and very concerned with the well being of all those around him. At the age of 40, he noted that his dreams would always turn to reality in his waking hours.

This encouraged him to spend more time away from people and he sought the peace and tranquillity of a cave in Mount Hira (near Makkah). It is said that he would spend days in seclusion and solitude, concentrating on his spiritual life. He would return to his family to maintain contact and also to replenish his provisions. It was during the last third of Ramadan (13 years before the Hijra) when Angel Jibril (Gabriel) appeared in the cave in the form of a man and commanded the Prophet to, "READ". When I replied, 'I am not one who reads,' the Angel, seized me and pressed me to himself until all strength went out of me," reported the Prophet. After releasing him he was once again commanded to, "READ." On his second answer that, "I am not a reader," he was again firmly clasped by the Angel Jibril. For the third time he was commanded to, "READ" and once again his negative response caught him in a tight squeeze. When the Angel released him from His clasp for the third time he was commanded to, "*Read: In the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clot (of congealed blood). Read: And your Lord is the Most Bounteous. Who has taught man the use of the pen. Taught man that which he did not know.*" When these words were firmly imprinted in the Prophet's heart, the Angel left.

With a trembling heart and exhaustion from this experience, he stumbled home and asked his beloved wife, Khadija (Radiallahu Anha), to cover him, as he feared that he had been afflicted. When he related the entire incident to Khadija (Radiallahu Anha), she immediately sought the advice of Waraqa ibn Nawfal, her cousin. It was the soothing wisdom of Waraqa ibn Nawfal, a Christian Scholar, with a good knowledge of Arabic, Hebrew and the Bible, who created that calmness in Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) by announcing his appointment as the Messenger of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). He was also informed that his task as Messenger would incur the enmity of this community to such an extent that they would toss him and his band of believers out of Makkah and even declare war against his mission.

### SIGNIFICANCE TO HUMAN EXISTENCE

This event has an important bearing on the life of humanity. Firstly, it refers to the existence of man here on earth and secondly, it marks the beginning of the greatest honour placed on man.

This revelation brought about a complete change in the course of human thinking. It clearly established that the source of all man's ideals, values, actions and criteria should not be based on the materialistic world or on man's own desires but instead, on Divine revelations. When nations and communities adopted this shift in their thinking and looked upon HIM directly for guidance in all their affairs, big or small and lived and moved under HIS supervision, they enjoyed the greatest success in their lives. All those who adapted their lives to this principle, were the ones who experienced the protection of the Creator, relished the sweet flavour of that contact and felt the divine hand guiding them along the right path to enjoy HIS bounties to the fullest.

The greatest honour bestowed on man was to single him out from the entire creation of this cosmos and appoint him as the recipient of HIS Divine light and the guardian of HIS wisdom in this alameen (entire cosmos). This event recognized the fact that ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) who is the Greatest, The Almighty, the Supreme, the Sovereign of this Cosmos, had chosen man and out of sheer benevolence, established contact with him, even though the entire cosmos echoed with submission and devotion.

There were 23 years of direct contact between the Highest Spirit and the human race. The believers who lived during this period were fully aware of the honour placed on man and followed this guidance as it was of paramount importance in their lives. They felt the great loss when the Prophet passed away. When Abu Bakr and Umar (Radiallahu Anhum) visited Umm Ayman, the nurse who took care of the Prophet during his childhood, she burst into tears. When they pointed out to her that ALLAH's company is far better for the Prophet, she accepted this fact but sadly indicated that all revelations would stop with his death. They joined her in shedding tears for this Divine detachment.

This event signifies that ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) has bestowed on man an honour, the greatness of which he can hardly ever appreciate and for which he can never show enough gratitude, not even, if he spends all his life in devotion and prostration. Here we have only attempted to mention two aspects of this great event. We need to be mindful that there are many other aspects that will remain beyond our human perception and understanding.

When man started to base his values on the directives from Heaven, rather than worldly matters nor on the laws of man, he had set a firm basis of life on this earth that will remain in existence until the day when ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) will inherit the earth and all that walks on it. One must never lose sight of the fact that in this so-called technological advanced age, we need to be guided by what ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) has revealed.

#### **THE THEME OF THIS SURAH**

Although the rest of the 14 ayat were revealed at different times and situations, there is perfect harmony between all parts of this surah when read as a whole. In the contents of the 19 ayat (signs, verses) of this chapter, we can identify 6 distinct

messages for us to read and understand, viz;

- This surah addresses the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) and commands him to read the message.
- Refers to the creation of man out of a mere clot of blood.
- Refers to the development of man, who is taught the bounty by the grace of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala), the soul in him reaching out to knowledge sublime, and the instrument of it, the sanctified pen.
- Speaks about ungrateful man, and despite all the blessings and graciousness that ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) had bestowed on him, he rebels.
- The surah points to the painful chastisement of those who cause a hindrance on others who are on the road to guidance and righteous deeds.
- The surah concludes with a command to prostration and drawing closer to the Creator.

In this article we have space to reflect on the first 3 messages of this surah to mark the great significance outlined above.

### ***1. Iqra' bismi Rabbikallazi khalaq***

Read! In the name of your Lord who created.

This was the first ray of Divine Light that penetrated the heart of the Prophet. This commandment to **'read'**, implies a conscious taking-in with the view of understanding this symbol of communication, regardless of sounding the word. This commandment goes beyond the mere 'reciting,' and sounding of something that has been written down or recalled from memory with little emphasis on understanding.

**'In the name of your LORD'** changed the whole course of history of the human race as it emphasised that mankind should accept the Divine source as a guiding light in their lives, instead of relying on human desires. We note that the Prophet was instructed from the very beginning of his sacred contact with the Highest Spirit, that, before taking any steps, it has to be in the name of your LORD. We note from history, that the Prophet and all the luminaries who adopted this important divine principle, not only enjoyed the protection and guidance of their Creator, but also HIS bounties. This remembrance, 'Bismillah – In the name of your LORD', accompanied every breath of the Prophet, that is, in his rising, sitting, sleeping, waking, riding, walking, starting, talking, stopping, eating, washing and in all his actions throughout his fruitful life. The compelling message from this sign, is that all our conscious actions and sub-conscious intentions should flicker with the utterance and understanding of "Bismillah (in the name of our LORD); Sub-Hanallah (glory be to our LORD; Alhamdoelillah (all praises be to our LORD); Allahu Akbr (Allah is the Greatest)" etc, as a continuous remembrance of our LORD and acceptance of the Divine position here on earth.

**'Who Created'** or Al Khaliq – the Creator was one of the first of the 99 attributes of the LORD mentioned. This ability to create and initiate, establishes the LORDSHIP of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) in the creation and existence of this universe. We need to read the signs of the Creator with the spiritual comprehension and understanding that all our actions on this earth should be preceded with 'Bismillah' – in the name of our LORD.'

## ***2. Khalaqal insaana min alaq***

Created man from a clot (of congealed blood)

This ayah (sign) further emphasizes the power of his LORDSHIP together with HIS mercy and boundless grace to elevate this leech-like substance, which clings to the womb, from the simple and primitive biological germ-cell, to the intellectual and spiritual potential of man. Some commentators have referred to alaq as either, the clay like substance from which Adam (alayhis salaam) was made of, or, the alaq of the male seed, which combines with the female egg in the womb to start the process of the origin of man. Some interpreters have also linked the graciousness and mercy of the LORD in the alaq to be witnessed in man, the possessor of kindness and affection for his fellow beings.

The past tense in which the verb 'khalaqa' – 'created' appears here is an indication that the act of divine creation has been and is being continuously repeated until the end of time.

This act of a conscious design and purpose underlying the creation of man from a clot should signify a doubtless understanding of the Sovereign power of the Creator.

## ***3. Iqra wa Rabbukal Akram***

Read! And your Lord is the Most Bounteous

The repetition of the word 'read' again focuses our attention to understand that our LORD is the most Bounteous instead of a casual recitation that is void of any changes in our belief and behaviour.

## ***4. Allazi allama bil Qalam***

Who has taught man the use of the pen

This ayah (sign) verifies that the source of all learning is from the Creator. From HIM man receives all his knowledge, past, present and the future. From HIM man learns any secret revealed to him about this universe, this life and himself. Here again we note the impact the first revelation had on the thinking of man where everything starts, works and moves with 'Bismi' – in HIS name. HE is the one who creates, originates and teaches.

**The pen** has always been the most widespread means of learning and it has the most far-reaching bearing on man's life. Today we know that the basis of whole civilizations, different kinds of knowledge and the progress of man in different fields pivot on the existence of the pen. The pen is used here as a symbol for the art of writing and more specifically for all knowledge recorded by means of writing. The ink that flows from the pen of the scholar has always been regarded mightier than the sword of the martyr. It was the pen that left traces from his life and reminders for the benefit of later generations.

## ***5. Allamal insaana maa lam ya lam***

***Taught man that which he did not know***

**Taught** man all the sciences and knowledge by means of writing. We need to understand the basic Qur'anic principle that whatever man learns and whatever experience and knowledge he acquires, comes originally from ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). This principal fact of faith should govern all our feelings, teachings and actions.

'HE has taught man that which he knew not' also implies continuity in learning. Individuals learn more and more, from day to day, and nations and humanity learn fresh knowledge at every stage.

## ***6. Kallaa innal insaana la yatгаа. 7. Ar-ra aahus tagna***

***No! Verily man does transgress all bounds, whenever he thinks himself (to be) self-sufficient.***

This is the nature of most human beings. Man in his excessive egotism and disrespect,

misinterprets ALLAH'S (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala's) gifts, mercies and bounties as his *own* achievements. HIS gifts and bounties appear in a variety of ways, such as, strength, beauty, wealth, position, power, even the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents. Man's overriding self-centredness clouds his consciousness and obstructs his view of truth and justice. He disobeys the laws of the Creator and ignores HIS guidance for 'he thinks himself to be self-sufficient.'

**8. *Inna ilaa Rabbikar ruj aa***

***Verily to your Lord is the return (of all things).***

This verse rudely reminds the rebellious and self-reliant man that his origin is from mere mud-like matter, and on death he will be returned to his Creator.

**9. *Ara aytallazi yanha.* 10. *Abdan izaa salla***

***Have you seen him who prevents a servant (of GOD) from praying?***

These short sentences create the impact of wonder, shock and dismay. Did you see? Have you observed? Have you realised this repulsive sight of a man who prevents a servant from praying to his Creator? This verse points to the behaviour and actions of this self-sufficient arrogant being, which not only shows disrespect to his Creator but also prevents others from fulfilling their duties of living a life of righteous deeds and actions. Some translators feel that there may be a reference made to Abu Jahl, the enemy of Islam, who rebelled against the laws of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) as well as prevented the Prophet and the early Muslims from following it.

**11. *Ara ayta in kaana alal Hudaa.* 12. *Aw amara bit Taqwa?* 13. *Ara ayta in kazzaba wa tawalla***

***Have you considered if he is on the right path? Or is concerned with taqwa? (GOD consciousness). Have you seen if he rejects and turns away from the truth?***

In these verses we are asked to use our critical assessment and become very observant of the abhorrent actions of people who will try to mislead us. Answers to questions such as; Are they on the right path? Are they conscious of their Creator? And, are they rejecters of the truth? should be clear guidelines to distinguish the arrogant with their false guidance and false example.

**14. *Alam ya lam bi annallaaha yaraa***

***Does he not know that ALLAH sees everything?***

There is an implicit warning given in this short interjection. All the deeds and actions of man are visible to the ALL-Knowing and ALL-Seeing Sovereign. HE has full control of HIS creation and nothing is hidden from HIM. Man is asked to conduct himself on earth as; if you see your Creator, and if you do not see HIM, HE sees you.'

**15. *Kalla la illam yantahi lanasfa am bin naasiyah.* 16. *Naasiyatin kaazibatin khaatiah***

***If he does not cease WE will drag him down by his forelock (forehead). A lying and rebellious forelock.***

The forelock or forehead is representative of the crown of man's power, dignity and stateliness. Here is a stern warning to the tyrant who suppresses the call of faith and obedience to ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). If the oppressor and dictator do not stop their arrogance, his forehead will be seized and forced down and dragged along the ground. He will suffer the lowest form of humility. When you are 'seized by your forelock, which is sinful and full of lies,' you have no choice but to submit to the

circumstances.

**17. Fal yad u naadiyah. 18. Sanad uz zabaaniyah!**

***Then let him call his henchmen (for help). WE will call out the angels of punishment (to deal with them).***

Reference is once again made to Abu Jahl and the Pagan Quraish clan, who were always ready to support their leader. This humiliation will continue regardless of the blind support of their tribe. Their physical power of numbers and the illusion of supremacy will be matched with the spiritual help of the Angels, the obedient soldiers of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). The righteous man has no fear as he has the ability and support to be victorious over all evil that is brought against him.

**19. Kallaa laa tuti hu wasjud waqtarib!**

***No! Do not obey him, but prostrate yourself (to ALLAH) and draw closer (to HIM)***

In the light of this frightening destiny of the disbelievers, this surah concludes with the instructions to the obedient servants of the Creator. This powerful warning is not to follow and obey the tyrant who is arrogant and self-sufficient. Instead, man has to rid himself of all insolence, show humility and acceptance that his Creator is the Supreme, by prostrating to HIM. In the position of prostration man gives a physical indication of humility and a mental preparedness that he wishes to draw closer to his Maker.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Always 'Read' with understanding, all the messages of the LORD so that the directives can be implemented in our lives to once again recognise the purpose of our existence here on earth.
2. We need to establish a continuous consciousness (Taqwa) in our existence, in gratitude for ALLAH'S (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala's) benevolence, mercy and love. All our actions, deeds and thinking must be preceded with 'Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem – with the name of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) the Most Gracious, the most Merciful.'
3. Most corruptions and vices raise their ugly heads among some of the wealthy and oppressive people. They live in comfort and are completely proud, self-sufficient and unaware of the pains of their fellow human beings.
4. Arrogance shows its ugly head when some obtain high positions in the community or regarded as knowledgeable or even placed in leadership roles. They become self-sufficient, become neglectful of their duties and forget their Creator.
5. In order to remove these vices from himself, Man should think of his own weakness as well as contemplate on the greater power of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). He should also take note of the demise of the past generations who had the arrogance and pride to consider themselves greater than their LORD.
6. Man must learn humility. This is his best defence.