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PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL STATES OF EMOTIONS
AND THEIR INTERVENTIONS WITHIN
QUR'ĀNIC NARRATIVES

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FOREWORD: A SPECIAL ISSUE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES (FIDS), AHAS KIRKHS, IN COLLABORATION WITH AL-HIKMAH: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Following the directive from the AHAS Kulliyah of IRKHS, the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies held its annual symposium on Scholarship Advancement Programme (SAP) on the 5th of August 2021. The one-day programme was an intervention to advance the development of scholarship among academics in AHAS KIRKHS. Its focus was to accelerate knowledge generation and dissemination by providing a conducive avenue for all academics to write, present, and publish their scholarly work in an academic journal. Since 2019, papers presented at the SAP symposiums have been published individually by staff at the FIDS. In 2022, FIDS has taken the initiative to publish selected papers as a special issue in collaboration with the Journal of Al-Hikmah.

This special issue contains eleven articles, nine in English and two in Arabic, which were presented at SAP 2021. This collection of SAP papers comes under the themes of Islam, Philosophy and Spiritual development. Most if not all articles selected for publication go in tandem with the scope and requirement of Al-Hikmah Journal. Among the areas touched by the authors are on Islamic religious teaching and learning activities, and Islamic movement in the region.

We hope this special issue would provide a kind of poignant magnetism that would touch the readers' interest as most of the papers highlighted the supremacy of knowledge and the significance of the role of spirituality. The concept of papers emerged from the thought that different scholars from diverse Asian countries would offer their respective experiences, historical facts and cultural heritage that would provide the highest level of satisfaction to the readers.



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Psycho-Spiritual States of Emotions and Their Interventions within Qur'anic Narratives

Keadaan Emosi Psiko-Spiritual dan Intervensinya dalam Naratif al-Qur'an

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Abstract

This article highlights different challenging emotional states exhibited by several prominent figures as narrated in the Qur'an, and the approach taken by the Qur'an in presenting and intervening with particular psycho-spiritual processes, which triggered such emotions. Materials and method: Anger (Q.12:84; Q.21:87), sadness (Q.12:86; Q.28:7), hopelessness (Q.19:23), trepidation (Q.19:24), and self-rumination/condemnation (Q.18:6) are among the conditions adversely affecting the emotional states of particular individuals, as exhibited in several Qur'anic stories. Qualitative in nature, the article employs both content and textual analyses on selective verses of qasas (narratives/stories) in the Qur'an. Content analysis probes deeper into the context of the whole qisṣah (story) to examine the underlying causes that triggered certain state of emotion. Whilst textual analysis assists in the clear understanding of the verses in terms of meaning, linguistic value and coherence between verses surrounding the focal issue. Conclusion: The finding suggests that challenging emotions and their interventions as portrayed by Qur'anic narratives are outcomes of both contextual implications, as well as psycho-spiritual states. These are normal human responses,

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even by prominent Qur'anic figures. Thoughts, psychological patterns and spiritual awareness pose as major contributing factors towards certain exposition of challenging emotional states. The significance lies in the way that their psycho-spiritual wakefulness has fortified them, enabling them to garner positive coping mechanisms to cope successfully.

Keywords: Qur'anic narratives, psycho-spirituality, emotions, Qur'anic interventions.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menonjolkan beberapa keadaan emosi mencabar yang dialami oleh sejumlah figura penting seperti yang diriwayatkan di dalam al-Qur'an, serta pendekatan yang diambil oleh al-Qur'an dalam membentangkan naratif dan intervensinya terhadap proses-proses psiko-spiritual tertentu, yang mencetuskan emosi sedemikian. Bahan dan kaedah: Marah (Q.12:84; Q.21:87), kesedihan (Q.12:86; Q.28:7), hampa/putus harapan (Q.19:23), kegusaran/gementar (Q.19:24).), dan kecaman diri (Q.18:6) adalah antara keadaan yang memberi kesan buruk kepada emosi individu tertentu, sepertimana riwayat al-Qur'an. Bersifat kualitatif, penulisan ini menggunakan kedua-dua analisis kandungan dan tekstual pada ayat-ayat qasas (riwayat/kisah) terpilih dalam al-Qur'an. Analisis kandungan menyelidik jauh ke dalam konteks keseluruhan qisṣah (kisah) untuk mengkaji punca asas yang mencetuskan keadaan emosi tertentu. Manakala analisis tekstual membantu dalam pemahaman secara jelas tentang ayat-ayat dari segi makna, nilai linguistik dan koherensi antara ayat-ayat yang mengelilingi isu fokus. Kesimpulan: Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa emosi-emosi yang mencabar dan intervensi mereka, seperti yang digambarkan oleh naratif al-Qur'an, terbit daripada implikasi kontekstual dan keadaan psiko-spiritual. Hal yang sedemikian adalah tindak-balas normal manusia, walaupun oleh figura-figura penting al-Qur'an. Pemikiran, corak psikologi dan kepekaan spiritual menjadi faktor penyumbang utama ke arah ekspresi tertentu keadaan emosi yang mencabar. Signifikannya adalah bagaimana ketinggian kepekaan psiko-spiritual berfungsi sebagai pemeriksaan, sehingga mereka memperoleh mekanisme daya tindak positif, lalu mampu berjaya mengatasi apa jua kegetiran rintangan.

Kata Kunci: Naratif al-Qur'an, psiko-spiritualiti, emosi, intervensi al-Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

Today humanity is confronted by multi-dimensional challenges that come with the uncertainties of an exponentially changing world—the way we live, communicate and relate to people and our surroundings, our work; the cyber-physical realities and the increasingly nihilistic world—all with blurring boundaries and dizzying speeds. For many, their already fragile mental health and well-being worsen with the advent of the

Coronavirus pandemic that hit the world late in 2019, with more than 177 million cases and 3.8 million deaths worldwide, and counting (COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic, 2021). The effects of the pandemic are multifaceted. A study conducted in Malaysia between May 12th to September 5th 2020 found that

the Malaysian public became increasingly vulnerable to depressive disorder as the pandemic continued... Malaysia has seen a rise in suicide cases and attempts during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings warrant urgent monitoring of the Malaysian population's mental health and prompt provision of counselling to mitigate the detrimental impact on society (Wong LP, Alias H, Md Fuzi AA, Omar IS, Mohamad Nor A, Tan MP, et al., 2021).

Malaysia is a Muslim majority country and Islam is the Religion of the Federation. Rightfully, the Qur'ān should be explored for ways in addressing the above situation. Emotions such as anger, sadness, hopelessness, trepidation, fear and self-rumination or condemnation are generally observed to be rife, especially in the current pandemic situation. If not addressed properly, these challenging emotional states may deteriorate further to severe depressive disorders with devastating consequences.

It is imperative to point out the synergy between mental health and well-being, and well-balanced state of emotions and psycho-spirituality. The place of the spiritual heart (*qalb*) is fundamental in the affairs of man. Al-Ghazali explains that the *qalb* constitutes the interplay between the '*aql*' (mind: the intellect, rational faculty), *rūh* (spirit: the spiritual faculty), *nafs* (soul: the faculty of desires and appetite) and the *qalb* itself (the emotive-affective faculty) (Al-Ghazali, 2009). Ensuring the holistic and well-balanced growth of all four, fully grounded on Islamic psycho-spirituality—one's conscious relationship with Allāh *Ta'ālā* (The Almighty)—is the key. The Qur'ān is replete with verses that appeal to the senses and sensibilities, and to the *qalb* (together with its components - the '*aql*', *rūh* and *nafs*) for psycho-spiritual health and well-being, such as Q. 2:1-5, 17:82, 10:57 and 26:80 as explained in the section on "The Premise" below.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This article attempts to (i) highlight different challenging emotional states such as mentioned, exhibited by several important figures as narrated in the Qur'ān, and (ii) the approach taken by the Qur'ān in presenting and intervening with particular psycho-spiritual processes, in relation with such emotions. The objective is to highlight that emotions such as anger, sadness, hopelessness, trepidation, fear and self-rumination/condemnation not only affect ordinary people, but also important figures in the Qur'ān, who were either great prophets or people of key significance vis-à-vis the *Risālah* (Message) of the Qur'ān. It is therefore important to analyse the relevant narratives and identify the Qur'ānic approach in intervening the challenging psycho-spiritual circumstances confronting the selected figures.

Qualitative in nature, the article employs both content and textual analyses on selected verses of *qaṣaṣ* (narratives/stories) in the Qur'ān. Content analysis probes deeper into the context of the whole *qiṣṣah* (story) to examine the underlying causes which triggered certain state of emotion. Textual analysis assists in the clear understanding of the verses in terms of meaning, linguistic value and coherence between verses surrounding the focal issue. To preserve the nuance of Qur'ānic expressions, the Qur'ānic texts discussed in this article have been reproduced here in English, intact and in-whole with some of the key Qur'ānic terms included in Latin transliteration. English translations and commentaries are mostly availed from 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī (Yūsuf 'Alī, 1989) and Muhammad Asad (Asad, 2011), with further explanations from *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Ibn Kathir, 2003) and Sayyid Quṭb's *In the Shade of the Qur'ān* (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016).

THE PREMISE: THE QUR'ĀN AS *HUDĀ* (GUIDANCE) AND *SHIFĀ'* (HEALING)

As the Final Divine Revelation, the Qur'ān is brimming with psycho-spiritual data. Apart from the first chapter *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, Verses 2 to 5 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, the second chapter of the Qur'ān give – very early – in the textual body of the Holy Book, important psycho-spiritual guidelines, namely:

1. the Qur'ān provides "*lā rayba fīhi (without doubt), hudān li'l-muttaqīn (guidance sure to those who fear Allāh) (Q.2:2)*" [those who have *taqwā* (ever-conscious of Allāh's presence and fear of His displeasure)];
2. "*yu'minūna bi'l-ghayb (who believe in the Unseen)*" [including trusting Allāh and His Wisdom behind any difficulties or calamities],
3. "*yuqīmūna al-ṣalāḥ (are steadfast in prayer)*" [in whatever circumstances, pleasant or challenged with difficulties],
4. "*razaqnāhum yunfiqūn (and spend out of what We [Allāh] have provided for them) (Q.2:3)*" [sharing wealth, time, talent, abilities, empathy, etc. with others];
5. "*yu'minūna bimā 'unzila (and who believe in the Revelation)*" [i.e. having solid faith in the Qur'ān in its entirety and all the earlier Revealed Books], and
6. "*wa bi'l-Ākhirati hum yūqinūn (in their hearts have the assurance) of the Hereafter (Q.2:4)*" [which provides one with the assurance that this life is short and transitory, whilst the Hereafter is Ever-lasting where ultimate justice is delivered];
7. and those who follow the above Qur'ānic guidelines are "*hudan-min Rabbihim (on (true) guidance from their Lord), wa ulā'ika humu'l-mufliḥūn (and it is these who will prosper) (Q.2:5).*"

Prosperity in this context includes the ability to manoeuvre through grave difficulties in life—events that bring forth intensely challenging emotions—with positive psycho-spiritual coping, securing one's well-being and prosperity in this earthly life, and sustained to the hereafter (*al-Ākhirah*).

Echoing the Qur'ān as "*hudā (Q.2:2, 5)*" above are further expressions such as the Qur'ān as "*shifā' wa raḥmatun li'l-mu'minīn (healing and mercy to those who believe) (Q.17:82)*" and "*mau'izātun min Rabbi-kum (direction from your Lord) wa shifā'un limā fī ṣudūr (and healing for the (diseases) in your hearts), wa hudan wa raḥmatun li'l-mu'minīn (and for those who believe, a guidance and a Mercy) (Q.10:57).*" Furthermore, the Qur'ān asserts in the first person reference, "*wa idhā mariḍ-tu (and when I am ill) fa-huwa yashfīn (it is He [Allāh] Who cures me) (Q.26:80).*" The Qur'ān "is certainly a cure and a blessing" for the true believer in Allāh The Most Gracious, whose *qalb* is ever-ready to receive its "grace, reassurance and security". The Book's "healing power that

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cures obsession, anxiety and hesitation... establish[es] a bond between the believer's heart and God... impart[ing] inner peace... as he experiences a feeling of security in God's protection (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016).” *Qaṣaṣ* in the Qur'ān are part of Allāh's *Āyāt* (Signs) for mankind to ponder, reflect, take lessons (*‘ibrah*), internalise and apply in practise—imparting a deep sense of psycho-spiritual connection between the believer and his fellow believers, and The Creator. This transcendental psycho-spiritual connection in itself is a healing.

SELECTED QUR'ĀNIC NARRATIVES (QAṢAṢ)

I. Prophet Ya'qūb (Jacob) and His Son Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) ('a.s.): Anger, Grief, Sorrow and Desolation

We refer to *Sūrah Yūsuf*, the story of Prophet Ya'qūb, his son Prophet Yūsuf ('a.s. - peace and blessings be upon him/them) and the cunning of Yūsuf's ten elder half-brothers. The Qur'ān refers to this story as “*aḥsana al-qaṣaṣ (the most beautiful of stories)* (Q.12:3).” so that humanity “*ta'qilūn (might reason)* (Q.12:2).”

“*Verily in Joseph and his brethren are signs (āyāt) for seekers (after Truth)* (Q.12:7).”

The *sūrah* narrates the wicked plan of the ten brothers against him (Q.12:8-18). Yūsuf was most noble in character and most beloved by Ya'qūb but was extremely hated by the ten brothers out of awful covetousness. The wicked plot evolved from suggestions of killing Yūsuf, to casting him away to unknown land (Q.12:9), and throwing him into the well (Q.12:10). The last was agreed and shrewdly executed. The brothers pleaded to Ya'qūb to allow them a 'pleasant' outing with Yūsuf (Q.12:11-12). Ya'qūb was sadly hesitant, fearing the worst (Q.12:13) but gave in. The brothers came back in the evening without Yūsuf, but with his shirt stained with false blood (Q.12:18), claiming that he had been devoured by wolves (Q.12:17), the very thing that Ya'qūb had cautioned the brothers against (Q.12:13) (Ibn Kathir, 2003).

The separation was a great bereavement for both the father and the son. One can only imagine the emotions. Ya'qūb's anger, feeling

betrayed, deep sorrow; and young Yūsuf's sadness, dejection and fear. Ya'qūb's response was,

...fa-ṣabrun jamīl (patience is most fitting): Against that which ye assert, wa'LLāhu'l-Musta'ān (it is Allāh (alone) Whose help) can be sought (Q.12:18).

These brothers' adamant hatred and envy over Yūsuf, and persistent disregard of Ya'qūb, saw the old father's prophetic wisdom as “*ḍalālin mubīn* (Q.12:8)” “folly or madness or imbecility (Yūsuf 'Alī, 1989)” or “in most obvious error (Asad, 2011)”. Yūsuf experienced waves of difficult tests: deceived and taken away from the love and safety of his father (Q.12:11-12), thrown in the well, abandoned by his brothers (Q.12:17-18), who sold him cheaply as a slave and taken hostage by travellers (Q.12:19-20), sold again (Q.12:21), enticed with sexual seduction (Q.12:23-24, 32, 51), wrongly accused of sexual misconduct (Q.12:25), and long imprisonment (Q.12:35-42, 45). He only endured all of these with *ṣabr* (patience, perseverance, constancy) and *taqwā* (deep-seated God-consciousness). On the attempts of seduction by the 'Azīz's wife, The Qur'ān describes

And (with passion) did she desire him [Yūsuf], and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord: thus (did We order) that We might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds: for he was one of Our servants, 'ibādīnā'l-mukhlaṣīn (sincere and purified) (Q.12:24).

He [Yūsuf] said: “O my Lord! the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me: Unless Thou turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant (Q.12:33).”

Years passed. Yūsuf was now in high position in the court of the Egyptian King, in-charge of the store-houses and the land (Q.12:55), and Egypt was held by famine. The ten brothers went to a store-house in Egypt for their supplies and met the authority in charge—Yūsuf, whom they did not recognise. Allāh inspired Yūsuf with a plot to reunite his family and ordered the brothers to bring his little full-brother Binyāmīn (Benjamin) (Q.12:59-81). Ya'qūb's response was for the brothers to take all precautions, and to put full trust in Allāh .

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“...Shall I trust you with him [Benjamin] with any result other than when I trusted you with his brother aforetime? **Fa’Llāhu khayrun ḥāfiẓā** (But Allāh is the best to take care (of him)), **wa huwa Arḥamu’l-Rāḥimīn** (and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!) (Q.12:64).”

“...Never will I send him with you until ye swear a solemn oath to me, in Allāh’s name, that ye will be sure to bring him back to me unless ye are yourselves hemmed in (and made powerless). And when they had sworn their solemn oath, he said: “Over all that we say, **Allāhu ‘alā mā naqūlu wakīl** (be Allāh the witness and guardian!) (Q.12:66).”

“...O my sons! enter not all by one gate: enter ye by different gates. Not that I can profit you aught against Allāh (with my advice): **Ini’t-ḥukmu illā li’Llāh** (None can command except Allāh). **‘Alaihi tawakkal-tu wa ‘alaihi falyatawakkali al-mutawakkilūn** (On Him do I put my trust: and let all that trust put their trust on Him) (Q.12:67).”

Binyāmīn stayed with Yūsuf and the ten brothers went back to their father. Ya‘qūb’s psycho-spiritual response upon learning the situation surrounding his youngest son, the young Binyāmīn is explained in the following verse:

“...Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you. So **patience is most fitting (for me)**. Maybe Allāh will bring them (back) all to me (in the end). For He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom (Q.12:83).”

The above added on the circumstances surrounding Yūsuf that, overtaken by extreme grief, Ya‘qūb’s physical well-being declined and he lost his eye-sight.

And he turned away from them, and said: “**How great is my grief for Yūsuf!**” And his eyes became white with sorrow, **min al-ḥuzni fa-huwa kaẓīm** (and he fell into silent melancholy) (Q.12:84).

Ya‘qūb’s “unshared, unexpressed, and uncomplaining” desolate sorrow was compounded by the wicked apathy, “heartlessness”, “jealousy,

taunting malice, and lack of understanding” of his ten elder sons (Yūsuf ‘Alī, 1989). As Ya‘qūb bereaved (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016) in silence, no one would understand him, and would further taunt him with imbecility of old age (Q.12:85), he found solace in Allāh :

He said: “Innamā ashkū baththī wa ḥuznī ila’Llāh (I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allāh)”, and I know from Allāh that which ye know not... “O my sons! go ye and enquire about Yūsuf and his brother, walā tay’asu min rauḥi’Llāh (and never give up hope of Allāh’s Soothing Mercy): truly no one despairs of Allāh’s Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith (Q.12:86-87).”

Ya‘qūb’s complaint to Allāh was about “the distraction of his mind and his occasional breaking out of those bounds of patience which he had set for himself”. He was fully cognizant of Allāh’s Mercy and Beneficence and the shallowness of his elder sons. His faith kept his hope for Yūsuf alive (Yūsuf ‘Alī, 1989).

It is also important to reflect on the way that Yūsuf dealt with his perpetrators after years of suffering the consequences of malice contrived against him. Instead of unleashing anger, frustration and revenge, he maintained his composure of God-consciousness and self-restraint (*taqwā*), and of patience and constancy (*ṣabr*). When asked to recall, long after the affair with the wife of the ‘Azīz, Yūsuf presented himself with **humility, seeking nothing but Allāh’s Forgiveness and Mercy**, even though it had become clear that he was completely innocent.

“Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: inna Rabbī Ghafūrun Raḥīm (but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful) (Q.12:52).”

On dealing with his elder brothers upon their seeking provisions during the big drought, Yūsuf (‘a.s.) did so with fairness, justice and “*khayru’l-munzilīn (the best hospitality) (Q.2:59).*” Upon being falsely accused by his elder brothers as a thief – not knowing that they were speaking to him, Yūsuf showed **self-restraint, God-consciousness (taqwā) and full reliance on Allāh (Q.12:77)**. When the brothers found out that he was indeed Yūsuf – their half-brother that they had wickedly

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disposed of – he was an embodiment of *taqwā*, **patience (ṣabr) and forgiveness (maghfirah)**:

*They said: “Art thou indeed Yūsuf?” He said, “I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother [Binyāmīn]: Allāh has indeed been gracious to us (all): behold, **innahĒ man yattaq-i wa yaṣbir** (if one is conscious of Him and patient in adversity), never will Allāh **lā yuḏī‘u ajra’l-muḥsinīn** (fail to requite the doers of good) (Q.12:90).”*

*He said: “This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: **yaghfiru’Llāhu lakum** (Allāh will forgive you), **wa huwa Arḥamu al-Rāḥimīn** (and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy)! (Q.12:92)”*

The Qur’ān narrates the above story beautifully to the end, where the entire family; Ya‘qūb (who regained his sight), Yūsuf, Binyāmīn and their mother, and his ten half-brothers reunited, in faith to Allāh , **in repentance and in forgiveness** (Q.12:97-98, 100).

II. Prophet Yūnus (Jonah ‘a.s.): Anger and Desolation

Yūnus (‘a.s.) was a Prophet assigned to call the people of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh (modern day Iraq). Initially, his message was not heeded by the people. Overcome by anger, he left them, leaving the mission that Allāh had entrusted him with lay abandoned (Asad, 2011). *Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt* (Those Ranged in Ranks) narrates,

*And, behold, Jonah was indeed one of Our message-bearers. **When he ran away** (like a slave from captivity) to the ship (fully) laden; He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned [into the sea]: Then the big Fish did swallow him, **wa huwa mulīm** (and he had done acts worthy of blame) (Q.37:140-142).*

*Had it not been that he- **min al-musabbiḥīn** (repented and) glorified Allāh , He would certainly have remained inside its belly till the Day of Resurrection (Q.37:143-144).*

Yūnus, also known as *Dhu al-Nūn* in the Qur'ān, is narrated in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā'* (The Prophets) as such:

And remember Dhun-nun (him of the great fish) idh dhahaba mughāḍiban (when he departed in wrath) faẓanna 'an lan naqdira 'alayhi (He imagined that We had no power over him)! Fanādā ft al-zulumāti (But he cried through the depths of darkness), an lā 'IlÉha illā Anta subhāna-ka innī kuntu min al-zālimīn ("There is no God but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!") So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress: and thus do We deliver those who have faith (Q.21:87-88).

Yūnus should have remained with his task, despite the rejection and relied on Allāh. Instead he went off in anger and ended up in the belly of the big fish. In the darkness “he felt acute distress (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016),” and cried out to Allāh seeking forgiveness.

The “darkness” may be interpreted both physically and spiritually; physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body; *spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself.* Allāh Most Gracious forgave him (Yūsuf 'Alī, 1989). (Emphasis added.)

Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt continues,

But We caused him to be cast forth on a desert shore, sick [at heart] as he was, And We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the gourd kind. And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more. And they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while (Q.37:145-147).

The gourd plant is referred to as a physical shelter for the desolate Yūnus (Q.37:146). Figuratively, “Allāh, who can cause a plant to grow out of the most arid and barren soil, can equally well cause **a heart lost in darkness to come back to light and spiritual life** (Asad, 2011)”. With this re-enlightenment, Yūnus repented in faith to Allāh, his repentance was answered and Allāh delivered him from the physical and spiritual darkness. As if to provide him with a personal redemption, Allāh sent him

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on another mission and in faith and humility did he carried it out to success, by the Will of Allāh.

III. The Mother of Mūsā (Moses 'a.s.): Fear and Sadness

The backdrop of this narrative is described in *Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ*:

Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections -yastaḍ'ifu (depressing) a small group among them: their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females: for he was indeed a maker of mischief (Q.28:4).

“Intoxicated with pride of race and pride of material civilisation (Yūsuf 'Alī, 1989)”, Pharaoh considered the Israelites in Egypt as “deemed utterly low... who had been placed on the lowest rung of the Egyptian social scale and were deprived of almost all human rights (Asad, 2011)”. In the midst of this fearful and intensely depressive situation,

So We [Allāh] sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: “Suckle (thy child), but when- khifti 'alayhi (thou hast fears about him), cast him into the river, but- lā takhāfi wa lā taḥzanī (fear not nor grieve): for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our apostles (Q.28:7).”

One can only imagine the riots of intense emotions felt by the mother: fear and spearing grief for the life of her infant—from Pharaoh's order, from drowning, and the separation from her suckling infant.

But there came to be- fārighan (an aching void) in the heart of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not- an rabaṭ-nā 'alā qalbi-hā (strengthened her heart (with faith)), so that she might remain a (firm) believer (Q.28:10).

Her only consolation was her complete reliance, and full trust in Allāh, resulting from Allāh's intervention of strengthening her heart (*qalb*) with a firm faith in Him (Asad, 2011). The mother's state of complete reliance with Allāh *Ta'ālā* was not passive. Rather, she instructed Moses' sister as such:

.... “Follow him” so she watched him in the character of a stranger. And they knew not. And we ordained that he refused suck at first, until (His sister came up and) said: “Shall I point out to you the people of a house that will nourish and bring him up for you and be sincerely attached to him? (Q. 28:11-12)”

Thus did We restore him to his mother, *kay taqarra ‘aynu-hā* (that her eye might be comforted), *wa lā taḥzanĒ* (that she might not grieve), and that she might know that *wa‘da’Llāhi haqqun* (the promise of Allāh is true): but most of them do not understand (Q. 28:13).

This state of being at ease – comforting to the eyes, relieved from any grievances – results from complete reliance with Allāh The Most Gracious, which comes from the conviction that Allah’s promise remains true, against any plots that the enemies of God may churn up (Yūsuf ‘Alī, 1989).

IV. The Virgin Mary (Maryam ‘a.s.): Hopelessness and Trepidation

Sūrah Maryam (Mary) narrates the description of Maryam’s difficult situation of conceiving her son ‘Isā (Jesus ‘a.s.) whilst no man had “ever touched” her, who “was not unchaste (Q.19:20)”. In a tight knit society that knew her “perfect purity and chastity (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016)” and her noble family of prophetic lineage very well, she was indeed facing a dreadful predicament. Pregnant, she went far away and remote from anyone that could throw her any scandalous misjudgement. She endured the difficulties of pregnancy and the excruciating pains of labour without the comfort of a built shelter—alone, with no one attending to her (Yūsuf ‘Alī, 1989).

So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): “Yā laytanī mittu qabli hādhĒ (Ah! would that I had died before this)! *Wa kuntu nasyan mansiyyā* (would that I had been a thing forgotten, utterly forgotten)! (Q.19:22-23)”

Despite her piety, and utter devotion to Allāh, Maryam (‘a.s) suffered great emotional and “psychological distress”—and now the pangs of labour pain

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made her cling to the trunk of the palm-tree. In that moment of solitary suffering, desolation and trepidation, she cried out wishing her to have been dead and totally forgotten (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016). But Allāh would not forsake or abandon her (Q.19:23). In the moment of anguish, she heard a voice from below her or beneath the palm tree:

“... An lā taḥzanī - Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet [water stream] beneath thee. And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to (Allāh) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into not talk with any human being' (Q.19:24-26).”

The voice informed her to grieve not, as within her immediate reach was Allāh's providence in the form of physical and spiritual relief, comfort, reassurance and nourishments: water to quench her thirst, freshen from fatigue and purify her, and fresh dates to replenish her physically. She was also instructed to fast from speaking to anyone. Allāh's providence was to prepare and fortify her physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and even socially, to face the very thing that she dreaded—the rejection and taunts of her people, reminding her “of her high lineage and the exceptional morals of her father and mother”, and how “she had [presumably] fallen, and disgraced the name of her progenitors (Yūsuf 'Alī, 1989).”

They said: “O Mary! truly an amazing thing have you brought!” “O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste! (Q.19:27-28).”

The spiritually fortified Maryam simply pointed to her infant 'Īsā and he spoke in defence of his mother and informing them of his *raison d'être*.¹

¹ A similar story of desolation and desperation is that of Hājar (*r. 'a.*), the blessed wife of Prophet Ibrāhīm (*'a.s.*) and mother of Prophet Ismā'īl (*'a.s.*) as narrated in *Faḥ al-Bārī Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

Ibrāhīm (*'a.s.*) had brought her and their infant son Ismā'īl to the dry and barren valley of Mecca, which had not been inhabited at the time. Ibrāhīm left them there, with only a small pouch of dates and a water-skin. Upon leaving, Hājar asked him, “...from where is this instruction? Is it from you or from God?” He said, “This is God's Command”. She then said, “*Idhan lā yudayyi 'unā* (He (Allāh) would not let us be lost)”. While walking and at a distant away, Ibrāhīm raised his hands in prayer:

V. Muḥammad (ṣ) (peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him) and his Companions: Self-rumination/condemnation and Fear

During the period that Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) relayed and preached the message of Islam

in Mecca, he was met with persistent, severe and hostile oppositions from the leaders of Quraysh. Amidst them, his own family elders. They abused the Prophet (ṣ) and persecuted the early Muslims in vile rejection of His call towards submission to the One True God, with the Divine message of salvation, peace and felicity. Many times, he was “deeply distressed by the hostilit[ies]... and suffered agonies of apprehension regarding their

"O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular Prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits: so that they may give thanks. "O our Lord! truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what we reveal: for nothing whatever is hidden from Allah, whether on earth or in heaven. (Q.14:37-38)

Blessed was Hājar, but she was nonetheless human. Very soon, the small supply of dates and water ran out. Her suckling infant cried out of thirst and hunger. Hājar also was in desperate need of water to replenish her milk for him. Instead of lamenting her predicament and giving in to the harsh elements, she ran towards Mount al-Ṣafā and up to the top looking out for any form of help. She did not find any. Then she ran down the valley and up to the top of Mount al-Marwah in her desperate attempt in search of relief. Nothing. Isolated, troubled and in distress, she frantically ran up and down between the two mountains seven times.

Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) said,

“...When she reached al-Marwah (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said:

“O whoever you maybe! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?”

And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zam-zam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing) till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water skin with water with her hands...””. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 3362 and 3363.)

Hājar’s complete trust, reliance and hope in Allāh’s Mercy, and her pro-active steely resolve were the precursors to human settlements in Mecca. She was buried alongside her son Ismā’īl, beside the Ka’bah, the direction to which Muslims turn in prayers, and the epi-centre of *Hajj*, the Muslims pilgrimage. She lies there, now, next to the Ka’bah surrounded by millions of Muslims who are there really, because of her sacrifice, reliance, trust and hope in Allāh.

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spiritual fate (Asad, 2011).” The unyielding Christians’ claim of Trinitarian theology (Q.18:4-5) added on to the above situation. Verse 6 in *Sūrah al-Kahf* describes the self-ruminating state of the blessed Prophet (ﷺ):

Fa-la‘alla-ka bākhi‘un nafsa-ka - Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, if they believe not in this Message- asafÉ (in grief) (Q.18:6).

The verse above consoles the Prophet (ﷺ) to “not destroy [him]self with regret”, “killing himself with anger” and “grief” or “anxiety” (“*asaf*”) over them. In other words, Allāh’s instruction to Muhammad (ﷺ), was for him to “just convey the Message of Allāh to them. Whoever goes the right way, then he goes the right way only for the benefit of himself. And whoever goes astray, then he strays at his own loss, so do not destroy yourself in sorrow for them (Ibn Kathir, 2003)”. Sayyid Quṭb on the other hand, is of the opinion that Q.18:6 is to nudge the Prophet (ﷺ) to move on (Sayyid Quṭb, 2016).

Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathir, 2003) cites the following verses that relay similar message to the Prophet (ﷺ), [perhaps both in the way of consoling and nudging].

...falā tadhhab nafsu-ka ‘alayhim ḥasarāt (So let not thy soul go out in (vainly) sighing after them) ... (Q.35:8)

Wa-ṣbir wa mā Ḥabru-ka illā bi’Llāh (and do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allāh). Wa lā taḥzan ‘alaihim (Nor grieve over them): Wa lā taku fī ḍayqin (and distress not thyself) because of their plots (Q.16:127).

And

La‘allaka bākhi‘un nafsaka (It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief), that they do not become Believers (Q.26:3).

The Qur’ān then reminds, conceivably in reference to the rich and powerful leaders of the Quraysh who had severely opposed the Prophet (ﷺ) and denied his *Risālah* (message), and to his followers who had nothing.

*That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth, **li nablūwa-hum** (in order that We may test them) **ayyuhum aḥsanu ‘amalĒ** (as to which of them are best in conduct) (Q.18:7).*

Worldly possessions, or the desires thereof, are tests to differentiate those that are enslaved by them, or become excessively attached to them, from those who use them wisely for the benefit of many, and when deprived, persevere with patience and constancy. *Sūrah al-Ṭūr* (The Mount) gives further reinforcement and consolation to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers:

***Wa-ṣbir li ḥukmi Rabbika** (Now await in patience the command of thy Lord): **fa inna-ka bi a’yuni-nā** (for verily thou art in Our eyes): **wa sabbih biḥamdi Rabbi-ka** (and celebrate the praises of thy Lord) **ḥīna taqūm** (the while thou standest forth) (Q.52:48).*

The Prophet (ﷺ) was told, despite the die-hard stubbornness and ignorance of the idolaters, he must exert the utmost to establish the Message of Allāh *Ta’ālā*—and to leave them:

***Fa-dhar-hum** (But leave them) in their confused ignorance for a time (Q.23:54).*

The verses are to remind that the outcome of the strivings was not up to the Prophet (ﷺ) but to the Decree of Allāh. Rather, he must wait with patience, knowing, by the assurance and the consolation that he is not forgotten by Allāh and that He is “constantly under His eyes”—under His loving care and protection; and to celebrate Allah’s praises when “standing” (“*taqūmu*”) – “forth in prayer”, or at all times when going about with business whilst observing justice; “but also for part of the night and at early dawn when worldly life is at a standstill (Yūsuf ‘Alī, 1989)”.

Often, the Prophet (ﷺ), his companions and followers were tested to the point that their spirit were so shaken—“*zulzilū*”—out of uncertainties and fear of further sufferings and adversities, that they cried out in desperation for Allāh’s intervention and help:

*Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They encountered **al-ba’sā’ wa al-ḍarrā’** (suffering and*

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adversity), wa zulzilū (and were so shaken in spirit) that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "matā naşru'LLāh (When (will come) the help of Allāh). "Alā inna naşra'LLāhi qarīb (Ah! Verily, the help of Allāh is (always) near) (Q.2:214)!

The Qur'ān reminds that Muslims will face trials and tests (*ibtilā'*), just like the *ummah* before them were tested. In fact, life itself is a test, which paves the path to (and in a way qualify for) Paradise. Rational acknowledgement of the truth “cannot, by itself, be a means of attaining to ultimate bliss, it must be complemented by readiness to sacrifice and spiritual purification through suffering (Asad, 2011).” So, it was the circumstances surrounding the Muslims were dire in the face of severe afflictions as tests (*ibtilā'*). On the one hand, they were intimidated with confrontations and hostilities by the non-believing Arabs, and the adherents of earlier religions (Sayyid Qutb, 2016). On the other, they encountered enormous blows during the Battle of *al-Aḥzāb* (the Confederates) (Ibn Kathir, 2003) as described in *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb*

Behold! they came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, idh zāghat al-abşāru (the eyes became dim) wa balaghati al-qulūbu al-ḥanājir (and the hearts gaped up to the throats), and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allāh . In that situation were the Believers abtuliya (tried): wa zulzilū zilzālan shadīdā (they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking) (Q.33:10-11).

At that moment, they cried out for Allāh's help and deliverance, for which Allāh replied that His help was indeed near (Q.2:214). Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathir, 2003) then cites “*Fa inna ma'a al-'usri yusrÉ, Inna ma'a al-'usri yusrÉ (Verily, along with every hardship is relief. Verily, along with every hardship is relief) (Q.94:5-6).*”

CONCLUSION

We have highlighted, as a way to demonstrate, several narratives (*qaṣaṣ*) revolving around key Qur'anic figures, namely Prophet Ya'qūb (Jacob) and his son Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph), Prophet Yūnus (Jonah); the mother of Prophet Mūsā (Moses); Maryam (the Virgin Mary) and Prophet

Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them all). As prophets and messenger of Allāh (in the case of Muḥammad (ﷺ)), and as the blessed mothers of Mūsā and ‘Isā (Jesus) (‘a.s, both of whom were Allāh’s messengers), they were no ordinary people. They were especially selected by Allāh The Most Gracious to carry His Divine *Risālah* and deliver the message to their people. In the case of the two blessed mothers, they literally carried the two messengers of Allāh and delivered them to the world. They were among people of the highest levels of *īmān* (faith in Allāh *Ta’ālā*), exceptionally pious, God-fearing and exalted in character. Notwithstanding their nobility and special position in the eyes of Allāh The Most Gracious, they were nonetheless human—sterling examples for their peoples and later generations. The Qur’ānic narratives (*qaṣaṣ*) show the humanness of these blessed figures. They too, suffered tremendously from the distressing ordeals (*miḥnah*) from tests and afflictions (*ibtilā’*) that Allāh *Ta’ālā* in His limitless Wisdom, had laid on their paths, resulting in anger, grief, sorrow, desolation, fear, sadness, hopelessness, trepidation and more. Thus, dispelling the false notion that people suffering from such challenging psycho-emotional states are lacking in *īmān*. In fact, the higher the level of *īmān*, the greater are the tests, as proven in many other *qaṣaṣ* of prophets and pious figures in the Qur’ān, hence the higher the levels of challenges.

“...Do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? (Q.2:214)”

Most importantly, the way in which these noble figures were inspired by Allāh The Most Gracious to deal with their distressing circumstances, as well as how the Qur’ān presents the respective psycho-spiritual interventions must be taken as examples or *‘ibar* (sing. *‘ibrah*)—excellent psycho-spiritual models for people, counsellors, psychologists and health-care practitioners, including psychiatrists in dealing with and addressing some of the mental-health issues in the increasingly challenging milieu of today. The lessons from the narratives cited are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Psycho-Spiritual States of Emotions exhibited by Selected Figures and Their Interventions within Qur’ānic Narratives as cited in the article.

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| Qur'anic Figures (<i>a.s.</i>) & Their Challenges | Psycho-Spiritual | |
|---|---|--|
| | Responses | Qur'anic Intervention |
| <p>Prophet Ya'qūb (<i>a.s.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cunning of Yūsuf's ten elder brothers and their disregard for the old father • Bereavement for the separation with Yūsuf, then with Binyāmīn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger, • Extreme grief, sorrow, • Apprehension • Solitary desolation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ṣabr</i> - Patience and perseverance • <i>Tawakkul</i> - Full reliance with Allāh • "<i>Innamā ashkū baththī wa ḥuznī ila'LLāh</i>" - I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allāh • "<i>Lā tay'asū min rauḥi'LLāh</i>" - never give up hope of Allāh's Soothing Mercy • Unremitting efforts |
| <p>Prophet Yūsuf (<i>a.s.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brothers' hatred and schemes against him • Separation from his father and little brother • Sexual enticement, accusation • Long Imprisonment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger, fear, • Sorrow, • Youthful folly, • Desolation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ṣabr</i> - patience, perseverance, constancy • <i>Taqwā</i> - God-fearing • "<i>'Ibādīnā'l-mukhlāṣīn</i>" - sincere and purified • Humility, seeking Allāh's Forgiveness and Mercy • "<i>Inna Rabbī Ghafūrun Raḥīm</i>" - but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful • Self-restraint, full reliance with Allāh |
| <p>Prophet Yūnus (<i>a.s.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His people's rejection of his message • Underestimated Allāh's Power and Will • Swallowed by the big fish, • Physical and spiritual darkness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger, ran off • Distress • Sick physically and at heart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repented, glorified Allāh • "<i>An llā'ilāha illā Anta Subḥānaka innī kuntu min al-ẓālimīn</i>" - There is no God but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong! • Allāh listened to him and delivered him from distress. "Thus do We deliver those who have faith". • Re-enlightenment: Physical and spiritual nourishment from Allāh • Redemption, second chance |
| <p>Mother of Prophet Mūsā (<i>a.s.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharaoh's threat of killing her son • Casting her son into the Nile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Sadness, void at heart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm faith and reliance with Allāh • "<i>An rraḥīmā 'alā qalbiḥā</i>" – Allāh strengthened her heart (with faith), • Complete reliance with Allāh and His Promise • "<i>Lā takhāfi wa lā taḥzanī</i>" - Fear not nor grieve • Constancy, never give-up, strategise efforts |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Maryam mother of Prophet 'Īsā ('a.s.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virgin pregnancy • Unassisted labour and childbirth • People's taunts, misjudgement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopelessness • Solitary physical and psychological distress and pain • Trepidation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allā taḥzanī</i> - Grieve not! • Allāh never forsakes His servants – reach out to His ample material and psycho-spiritual provisions and nourishments • Physical and Psycho-spiritual strength and composure • Confidence and reliance in Allāh |
| <p>Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peoples' rejection and hostilities • Battle of al-Aḥzāb | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-rumination/condemnation • "<i>Zulzila</i>" - Shaken with extreme fear • "<i>matā naṣru 'Llāh</i>" - When (will come) the help of Allāh ? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience: "<i>Wa aṣbir li ḥukmi Rabbika</i>" - Now await in patience the command of thy Lord • Firm faith and reliance with Allāh: "<i>Fa innaka bi a 'yuninā</i>" - for verily thou art in Our eyes • Constant remembrance of Allāh: "<i>Wa sabbiḥ biḥamdi Rabbika ḥīna taqūmu</i>" - and celebrate the praises of thy Lord the while thou standest forth. • Never give-up hope and reliance with Allāh: "<i>Alā inna naṣra 'Llāhi qarīb</i>" - Ah! Verily, the help of Allāh is (always) near! • "<i>Fa inna ma'a al-'usri yusran, Inna ma 'a al-'usri yusran</i>" - Verily, along with every hardship is relief. Verily, along with every hardship is relief" |

The Qur'ānic psycho-spiritual interventions were specific to the cases cited. However, it is agreed that the transcendental nature of Qur'ānic message dictates that generality applies across different eras and circumstances. Therefore, the above Qur'ānic psycho-spiritual interventions also apply to the different contemporary circumstances that give rise to similar psychological, emotional and spiritual responses. In summary, the psycho-spiritual intervention highlighted are

- (i) *ṣabr* (patience, perseverance, constancy),
- (ii) replenishing strong faith (*īmān*) in Allāh,
- (iii) always in a state of internalising remembrance of Him (*dhikr*) and glorifying Him (*taṣbīḥ, taḥmīd*),
- (iv) repentance (*tawbah*),
- (v) reliance and hope (*tawakkul*) towards Allāh, never to give up,
- (vi) fearing no one but Him (*khashyah*)—seeking Allāh, and
- (vii) always returning to Him The Most Gracious (*rujū*).

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The significance lies in the way that the psycho-spiritual wakefulness of these figures has fortified them, enabling them to garner positive coping mechanisms and to cope successfully. Psycho-spirituality in this context is the psychological and spiritual states that come about as a result of intimacy or strong ties and closeness with The Creator and Sustainer Himself, Allah The God Almighty (*taqarrub min Allāh*). In many ways, trials and tribulations are Allah's way in drawing His slave servants closer to Him and thus fortifying them psychologically and spiritually, with the result of strengthening them affectively, intellectually and physically. Indeed, mankind came from Him and unto Him we must return, in life and in death.

Another *qiṣṣah* worth citing at this point, is the initial story of humanity, the story of Ādam and Ḥawa' (Eve) ('*a.s.*), the father and mother of humankind. We learn from the Qur'ān, the dignified initiation of Ādam ('*a.s.*) in the Garden (*al-Jannah*) (Q.2:30-34) and Iblīs's refusal out of haughtiness ("*abā wa 'stakbara*") to obey Allāh's command to bow to Ādam (Q.2:34; Q.15:32-35). Iblīs's "disbelief, arrogance and rebellion caused him to be expelled from the Presence and Mercy of Allāh (Ibn Kathir, 2003)."

We (Allāh) said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; wa lā taqrabā hādhihi al-shajarata (but approach not this tree), fatakūnā min al-ẓālimīn (or ye run into harm and transgression) (Q.2:35)."

However, Satan deceived both Ādam and Ḥawa'. They not only went to the tree, but they ate from it, causing them to be stripped from their heavenly attire, expansive dwelling and copious provisions (Ibn Kathir, 2003).

Then did Satan fa'azallahumā (make them slip from the (garden)), fa'akhrajahumā mimmā kānā fīhi (and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been). We said: "Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time (Q.2:36)."

One can envision the state of affairs regarding Ādam and Ḥawa', being sent away from the comfort and luxuries of the only place they knew,

being stripped naked and sent to the foreign and unfamiliar terrain—separated from each other—in the midst of strange foliage and wild beasts and serpents roaming about. Such were the consequences of their mistake. The tree was humanity’s first test and a symbol of humanity’s forgetfulness and folly, allowing the self to be deceived by Satan, whom Allāh has accursed (Q.15:36-39) and declared as humanity’s archenemy (Q.2:168). As humans, we all face ‘the tree’, ‘slip and fall’ like Ādam and Ḥawa’, and suffer the consequences thereof, “*fatakūnā min al-zālimīn* (Q.2:35), running into harm and transgression, many times falling into distressing situations and depressive states. The beautiful lesson of such painful experiences is captured in the following verses:

Fatalaqqā Ādamu min Rrabihi kalimātīn (Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration), *fatāba ‘alayhi* (and his Lord Turned towards him); *innahu huwa al-Tawwābu al-Rahīmu* (for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful) (Q.2:37).

They said: “*Rabbanā* (Our Lord)! *Zalamnā anfusanā* (We have wronged our own souls): *wa in’llam taghfir lanā* (If thou forgive us not) *wa traḥamnā* (and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy), *lanakūnanna min al-khāsirin* (we shall certainly be lost) (Q.7:23).”

Man needs to “fall”, and Allāh in His Wisdom lets him so, to feel the consequences of his own doings, then to experience the need to pull himself back up to return to the straight path, leading to where he should be – close with The Creator and Sustainer, to return to Him in a high psycho-spiritual state – “*bi qalbin salīm* (a sound heart)” (Q.26:89). Had Ādam and Ḥawa’ not fallen, they would not have known the value of being in the bliss of Paradise. When a person falls into difficult, challenging and depressive situations of anger, grief, sorrow, desolation, fear, sadness, hopelessness, and trepidation—he is not forsaken. Just like Ādam and Ḥawa’:

We (Allāh) said: "Get down all of you from this place (the Paradise), then whenever ya'tiyannakum minnī Hudan (there comes to you (guidance) from Me), and whoever follows My guidance, *falā khaufun ‘alaihim* (there shall be no fear on them), *wā hum yaḥzanūna* (nor shall they grieve) (Q.2:38).

The verse demonstrates a special intimate personal relationship that Allāh *Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm* (The Most Gracious and The Dispenser of Grace), as *Rabb* (The Lord Cherisher and Sustainer) has taken upon Himself, to guide His slave servants towards Him, in spite of their falls. When the erring follows Allāh's guidance, he is liberated from fear and grief, and draws closer to Him, The Most Gracious. Indeed,

Laqad kāna fī qaṣaṣihim 'ibratun lli-ūli al-bāb (There is, in their stories, instruction for men endowed with understanding). It is not a tale invented, but *taṣdīqi* (a confirmation) of what went before it, *wa tafṣīla* (a detailed exposition) of all things, *wa hudan wa raḥmatan yu'minūna* (and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe) (Q.12:111).

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