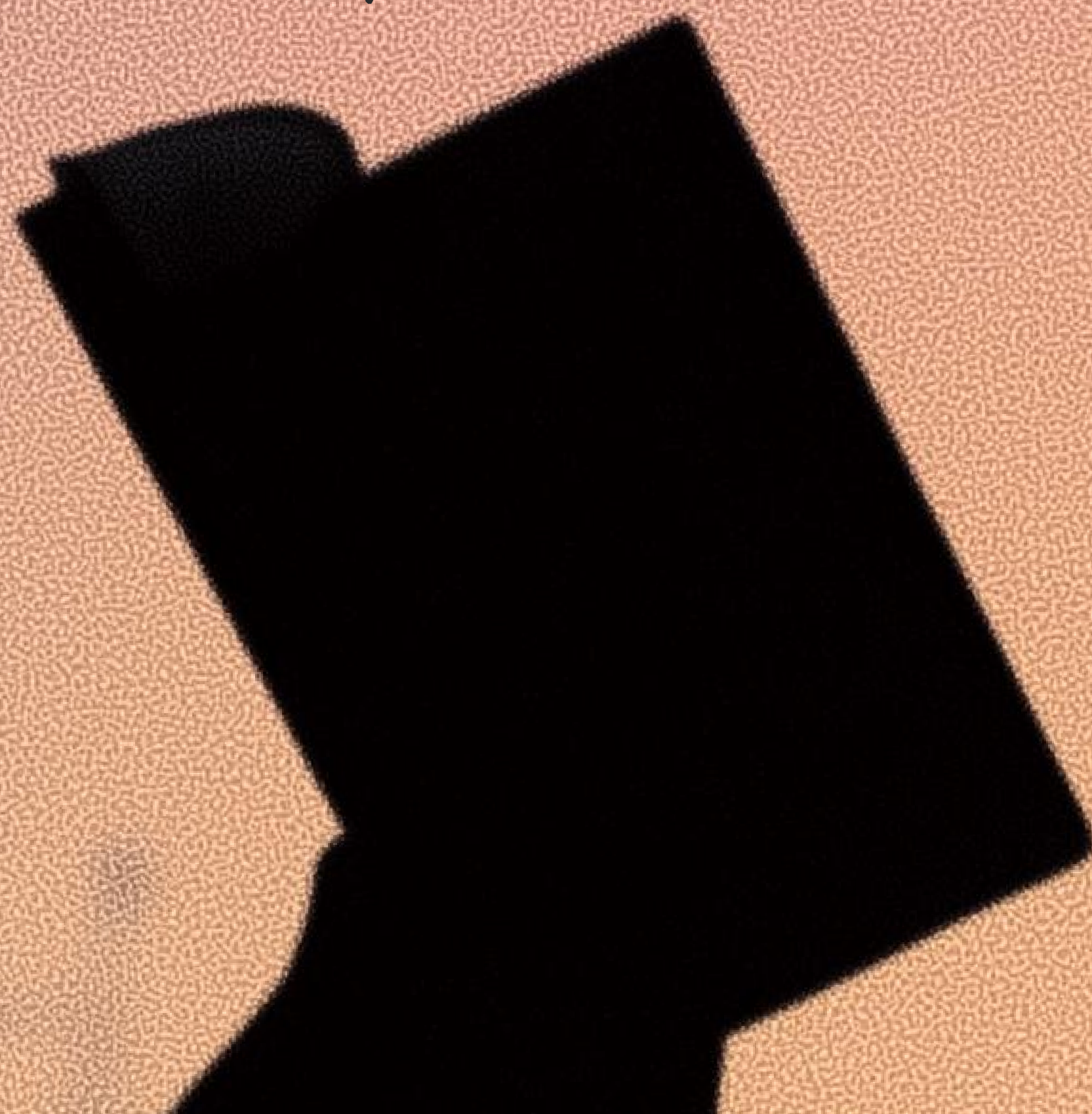


IQRA'

As a Lifelong Mission

Tafsir of the first 5 Ayahs of Surah al-Alaq
& its Practical Applications to our Lives

with Ustazah Marhamah Senewi



Part One:



Let's first reflect on
this meaningful
Hadith surrounding
the first revelation
to Rasulullah ﷺ!

Sayidatina A'isha RA, reported:

The commencement of the Divine Inspiration to Rasulullah ﷺ was in the form of good righteous (true) dreams in his sleep. He never had a dream but that it came true like bright day light.

Thenceforth solitude became dear to him and he used to seclude himself in the cave of Hira', where he would engage in Tahannuth (a type of worship for a number of nights) before returning to his family and getting provisions again for this purpose.



Rasulullah ﷺ's Love for Solitude

The word that is used in the Hadith when referring to the love or desire of being alone is حُبِّ, which implies **something is placed in the person**. It is not natural. It is not that Rasulullah ﷺ as his own person naturally wanted to stay away from people but that the desire to be alone was **placed** in him.

تَحَنُّثٌ

Tahannuth

When we look at the root form of the word, it means ‘guilt’, ‘sin’, ‘unrighteousness’ or ‘perjury’. The root word can also be changed into تحنفا, which implies that we want to **distance ourselves from something**.

Rasulullah ﷺ was distancing himself physically from unrighteousness and sin at a time when significant injustice was occurring, and sins were rampant within the community.

Another meaning of Tahannuth is ‘**devoted worship**’, exemplified by Rasulullah ﷺ when he worshipped Allah SWT in the Cave of Hira, away from society.

(continuation of Hadith)

*He would then return to Khadija and take provisions for a like period, till **Truth (Haqq)** came upon him while he was in the cave of Hira'. The angel came to him in it and asked him to read. The Prophet ﷺ replied, "**I do not know how to read.**" (The Prophet ﷺ added), "The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it anymore. He then released me and again asked me to read, and I replied, "**I do not know how to read,**" whereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it anymore. ,*

The Quran is the Only Truth

The term Haqq (Truth) used in this Hadith denotes that **the Quran is nothing but the Truth**. It positions the Quran in a manner in such a way that no doubts or misgivings should exist. When Muslims contemplate the Quran, they recognise it as the Truth. What is asked of them to do in the Quran is the only right thing to do.

Linguistically, Haqq also means 'rights', and with rights come responsibilities. This means the Quran details our rights and responsibilities as well.

Breakdown of

مَا أَنَا بِقَارِيءٍ

"I do not know how to read"

The word form of قَارِيء is **Isim fa'il** (noun derived from a verb) and can mean a few things:

- (1) **We have not read:** For example, when someone asked if we have read the materials for class and we answered we have not read them.
- (2) **We are not going to read**
- (3) **We cannot read:** For example, we cannot read due to the language barrier.

Rasulullah ﷺ fulfilled all three levels!

He ﷺ has never read, he ﷺ was unable to, and even if he ﷺ wanted to, he ﷺ cannot read.

(continuation of Hadith)

He took hold of me and pressed me for the third time, till I was hard pressed and then let me go and said: Recite in the name of your Lord Who created, created man from a clot of blood.

*“Recite. And your most bountiful Lord is He Who taught the use of pen, taught man what he knew not”
(al-Qur'an, 96:1-4).*

*Then the Prophet returned therewith, his heart was trembling, and he went to Khadija and said: Wrap me up, wrap me up! So they wrapped him till the fear had left him. He then said to Khadija: O Khadija! What has happened to me? and he informed her of the happening, saying:
I fear for myself.*

(continuation of Hadith)

She replied: It can't be. Be happy. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you. By Allah, you join ties of relationship, you speak the truth, you bear people's burden, you help the destitute, you entertain guests, and you help against the vicissitudes which affect people.

Khadija then took him to Waraqa b. Naufal b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzza, and he was the son of Khadija's uncle, i. e., the brother of her father. And he was the man who had embraced Christianity in the Days of Ignorance (i. e. before Islam) and he used to write books in Arabic and, therefore, wrote Injil in Arabic as God willed that he should write.

Praiseworthy Trait #1:

لَتَصِلُ الرَّحِمَ

He ﷺ join ties of
relationships

It is humanly hard to keep relations with all our family members, but Rasulullah ﷺ did with the different characters of his family, such as Abu Lahab and Abu Jahal. His family was made up of two spectrums - from the best to the not so good. Even so, he ﷺ kept good relations with every single one of them.

To Ponder:

Do we uphold our
kinship in the
same manner as
Rasulullah ﷺ?

Can we assure
that we nurture
relationships with
every member of
our family, or do
we choose to be
selective?

Praiseworthy Trait #2:

وَتَحْمِلُ الْكُلَّ وَتَكْسِبُ الْمَعْدُومَ

**He ﷺ bear people's burden,
and help the destitute**

Rasulullah ﷺ bore the burden of those who have no one and who were left entirely alone, as well as those who were destitute with no financial means. He ﷺ took someone who had nothing, and made them grow into a better and honorable state from their previous state of poverty and destitution. He ﷺ made them valuable so that they can profit for themselves.

**He ﷺ elevated their value, despite being
someone of a high value himself.**

Praiseworthy Trait #3:

وَتَقْرِى الضُّيْفَ وَتُعِينُ عَلَى
نَوَائِبِ الْحَقِّ

**He ﷺ entertain guests,
and help against the
challenges which
affect people.**

In spite of who he was, Rasulullah ﷺ
was courteous to his guests, and would
help those who would require their
rights to be fulfilled.

*This honest and reliable
“review” of how
Rasulullah ﷺ was as a
person was from someone
who was always with him
ﷺ, his beloved wife,
Sayidatina Khadijah RA.*

*This shows the true
character of Rasulullah
ﷺ, as even behind closed
doors, his closest and
dearest still saw him as
an upstanding person, ﷺ!*

To Ponder:

How do we speak
with or about our
loved ones? Do we
elevate their worth
and validate their
feelings like what
Sayyidatina
Khadija RA did to
Rasulullah ﷺ?

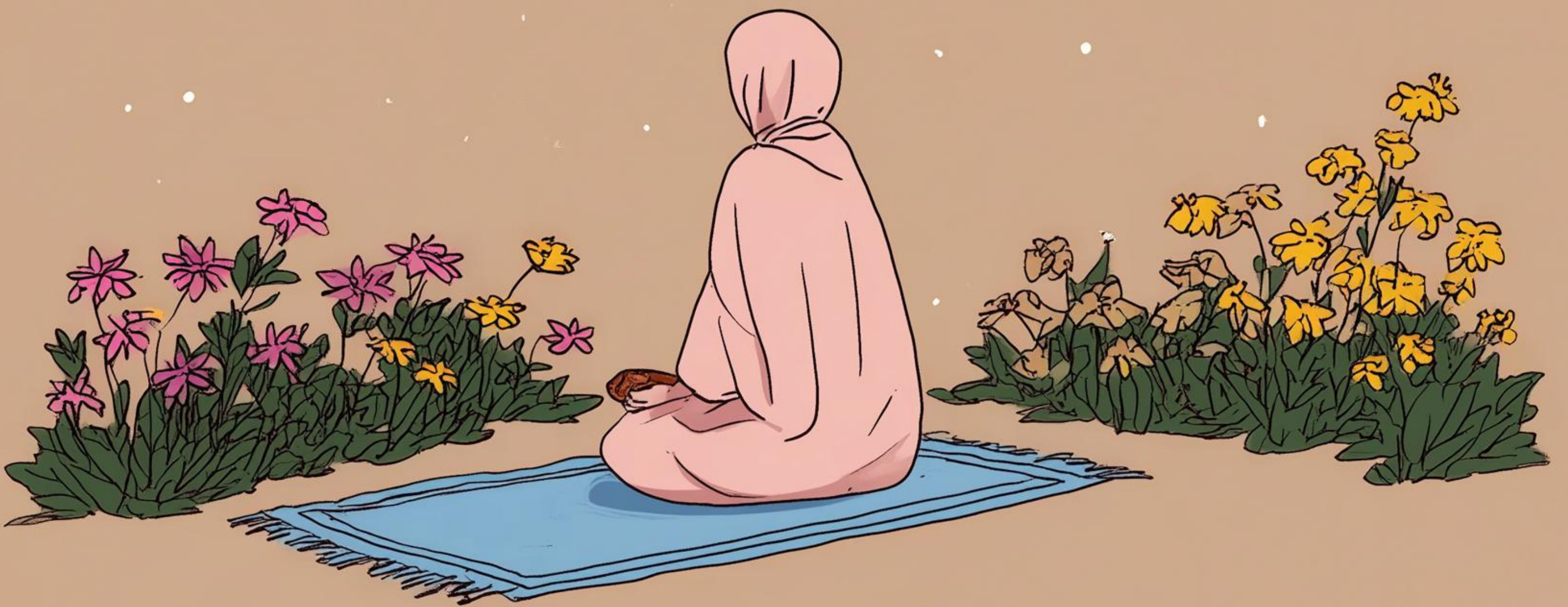
(continuation of Hadith)

He was very old and had become blind. Khadija said to him: O uncle! listen to the son of your brother. Waraqa b. Naufal said: O my nephew! what did you see? The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), then, informed him what he had seen, and Waraqa said to him: It is namus that God sent down to Musa. Would that I were then (during your prophetic career) a young man. Would that I might be alive when your people would expel you! The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Will they drive me out? Waraqa said: Yes. Never came a man with a like of what you have brought but met hostilities. If I see your day I shall help you wholeheartedly.

(Sahih Muslim)

Part Two:

Tafsir of the first five verses of Surah Al-'Alaq





أَقْرَأْ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ

***Read, 'O Prophet,' in
the Name of your Lord
Who created—***

(Al-'Alaq 96:1).

أَقْرَأْ

Iqra

أَقْرَأْ comes from the root form قَرَأَ which means ‘**read**’. Another meaning of the word is ‘**to repeat after someone**’.

Rasulullah ﷺ would hear the Quran from Jibril AS and he would memorise it. **The verses would be imprinted in his heart and he will convey it to the people.** This is relevant since the people at that time were known for their spoken word such as poetry. This was how the Quran was revealed and shared before it was compiled as a book during the times of war.

Meanings of Iqra'

The **أَقْرَأُ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ** in **بِ** can denote different meanings:

Read, With the Help of Your Rabb

Acknowledging that the Quran is a Gift and that the ability to read is a Gift.

Read, For the Reason of Your Rabb

We read the Quran as a means to be Closer to Allah SWT, and we read also to get closer to Allah.

Read, With Allah's Permission to do so

When we read, we should have the mindset that we are reading as Allah's Slave.

Reading is a Privilege

When we look at the three meanings, we should be able to understand that the ability to read the Quran, as well as reading in general, is a privilege. Our reading should be approached with humility and the understanding that we are slaves of Allah SWT. The Quran holds authority as it consists of the words of Allah, SWT our Rabb. It is coming from a figure of Authority. When engaging with the Quran, we cannot selectively choose what works for us and what does not.



بِسْمِ رَبِّكَ

Bismi Rabbika

Rabb encompasses many meanings. Firstly, it means **God**. It also means Malik (**Owner**) or Sayyid (**In-Charge**). Other meanings of Rabb include **Master, Oone who takes care of us; One who maintains & sustains.**

Allah SWT has complete authority over us, **AND** will take care of us. He is not a Master who lords over us and leaves us. He wants us to win in life. The Quran is evidence of this - Allah SWT had no obligation to provide us with the Quran that outlines the facts of life, our rights, our responsibilities, the consequences, our rewards, our punishments, and so forth but He did!

Why ‘Rabb’ and not ‘Allah’?

“Allah” is a widely accepted concept and term for ‘God’ for the Arabs during the past. If Allah SWT had used the word ‘Allah’, the Arabs would have accepted the concept easily. However, they had issues with the concept of complete authority that Allah SWT has over them. The idea of someone being in authority or a Master over them, making them His slaves was something they struggled with as most of them were human slave masters themselves.

Using the word Rabb instead of Allah is intentional in driving the point home - He is their Master, whether they accept it or not. He negated the idea that there are other gods other than Him.



خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ
عَلَقٍ

*created humans from
a clinging clot.*

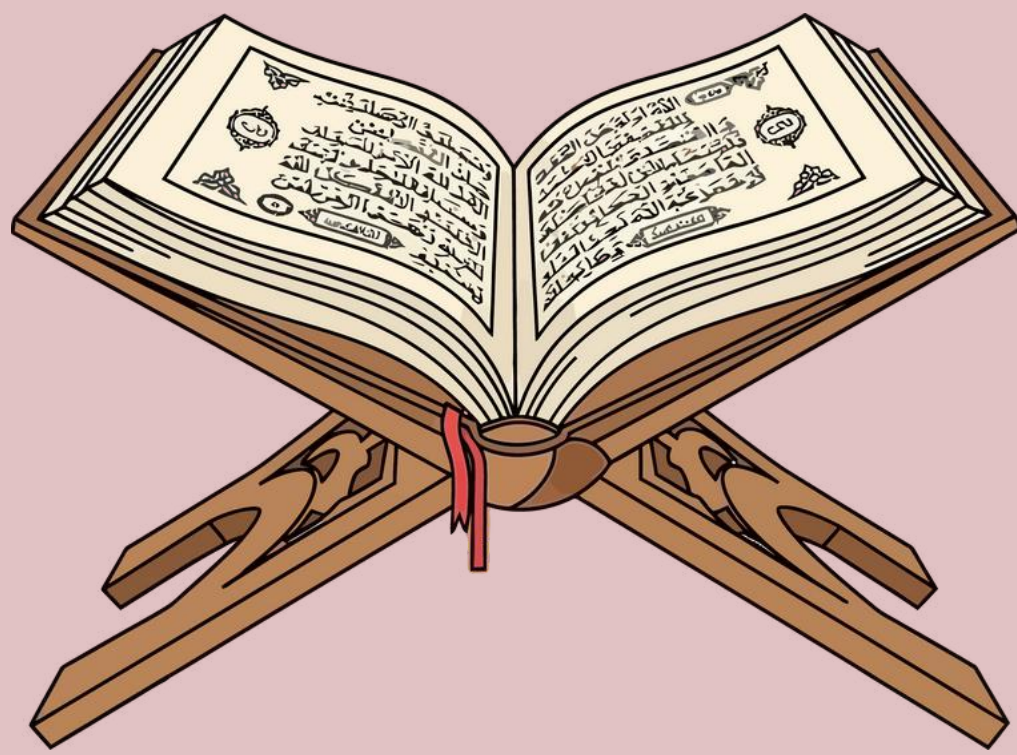
(Al-'Alaq 96:2).

A Rabb Who Created Us

When we leave something open-ended, we can leave questions where someone's power or ability is not known. In Allah SWT's case, when He leaves a verse open-ended, there's no questioning Him. It is clear what He has created - **everything**. In this verse, Allah SWT defined creation in terms of ourselves. He wants us to understand His creation, starting with our own selves, something that we can see and touch. We started as a foetus that “leeches” off its mother’s nutrients, similar to how a leech does. Allah SWT created us from this parasitic stretch, in this hyper-dependent stage, from the bottom of the food chain and **elevated us with His Mercy** through our mother’s nutrients.

Allah's Mercy

Allah SWT has bestowed His Mercy to us by giving us the understanding of the Quran. He has guided individuals and civilisations by His Mercy. Through His Rahmah, Allah SWT also prepared Rasulallah ﷺ to receive the divine revelations that we are still benefiting from today, till the end of times. Allah SWT has also elevated us to accept this love for the Quran; and to embrace this privilege of being the People of Quran. Allah SWT, through His Mercy, has also provided us with the means to become people of reason, capable of understanding and reading.



Thriving with the Quran

Reading is Allah's Mercy for us to **thrive**. For example, we blossom and progress from a student to a doctor or from a person with no faith to a Muslim with taqwa. With Quran,, the Arabs thrived as People of Science, Philosophy and Tafseer. **The Quran was the catalyst for their civilisation to thrive.**



أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

*Read! And your Lord is
the Most Generous,*

(Al-'Alaq 96:3).

الأَكْرَمُ

Al-Akram

The اَلْ in front of Akram means 'the most'. Allah SWT is the Most Generous, Most Dignified, Most Honoured, Most Noble.

By using this Name, Allah SWT is teaching us that the act of reading comes with Allah SWT **dignifying us**. As we engage in reading, we are honoured and elevated by Allah SWT. **We gain the honour of being a student of His Word**. The more we read, the higher our status becomes. Through our reading, Allah SWT is raising us up. The honour and elevation don't come after or before reading; it come hand in hand together!



الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

*Who taught
by the pen—*

(Al-'Alaq 96:4).

By The Pen

When we examine the various texts that were delivered to Allah SWT's previous Prophets (may Allah SWT bless them all)

over time, we find that they were all revealed as written words, in contrast to the Quran (as spoken word). Allah SWT

has given knowledge to different civilisations throughout time - and also the ability to scribe and to archive their knowledge and to educate others. The civilisations before were all writing down whatever they had learned, which then enabled the people who came after to build on that knowledge and to further educate others.



Reading for Allah

Allah SWT gifted us the ability to think, to explain, to speak, and to reason with logic. That's why we can read, and if there was nothing written, nothing could be read. Furthermore, if there was no speech, there was nothing to be written. We truly don't think about the different level of gifts that Allah SWT has granted to us. Ma Sha Allah. In this Surah, Allah SWT emphasises reading in relation to Al-Quran. **The Quran is the climax and pinnacle of Knowledge and the most important Gift because it is our Purpose.**



عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ
مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

*taught humanity
what they knew not.*

(Al-'Alaq 96:5).

مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

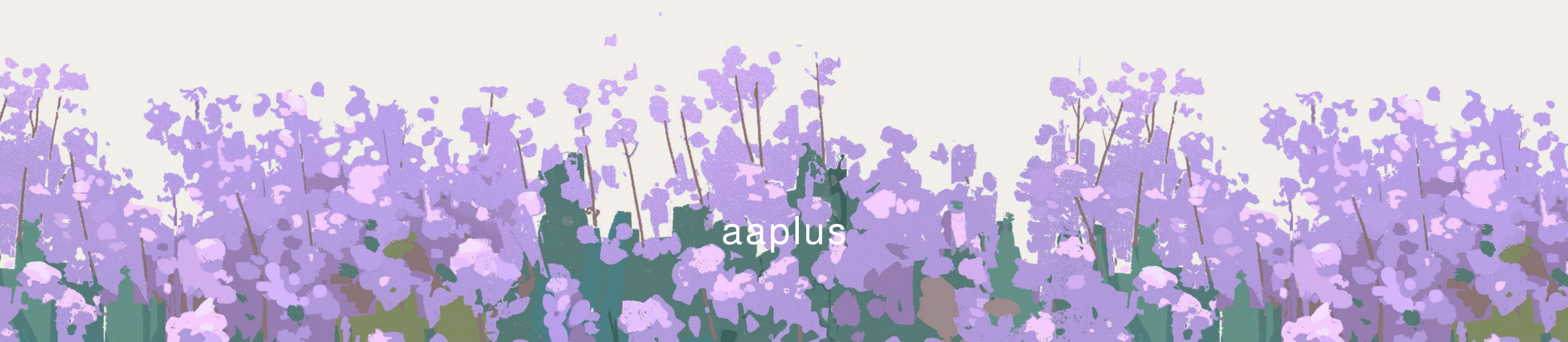
Ma Lam Ya' Lam

The لَمْ could mean two things - what humans do not know and what they could **not** have known. Allah SWT taught us everything that we know and everything that what we could never have known, even something as basic as human knowledge that we have collected throughout time and passed through generations. But it is important for us to understand that all knowledge is Allah's knowledge. Whatever we read, learn or are working hard towards belong to Allah SWT.

All Knowledge belongs to Allah SWT!

Doctors
Cleaners
Librarians
Teachers
Scientists
IT Consultant
Event Planner
Mathematicians
Atheletes
Brokers
Architects

and many, many more!





Ustazah's final words:

*Don't diminish
your own value
and don't let
others diminish
your value. Allah's
knowledge is vast
and everything on
God's green earth
belongs to him.*