

(*Note*: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

### **For Fast 3 – August 14**

#### **Topic: Allah**

#### **Chapter 17**

- 42 Say: If there were with Him gods, as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of the Throne.<sup>1</sup>
- 43 Glory be to Him, and He is supremely exalted above what they say!
- 44 The seven heavens and the earth and those in them declare His glory. And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Surely He is Forbearing, Forgiving.<sup>2</sup>

*Notes:*

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**1** The idol-worshippers were sunk deep in vices and immorality, while access to the Divine Being — *a way to the Lord of the Throne* — which they claimed they got through their idols, should have purified their lives. Or, the meaning is that, if they had access to God, Who holds all power in His hands, they should have received Divine help and been successful in uprooting Islam.

**2** The whole universe is here mentioned as declaring the glory of Allah, which means *declaring God to be free from every imperfection and impurity, or from everything derogatory to His dignity*. This declaration need not be with the tongue and in words: in fact, the very dependence of the whole creation on the Creator and its consequent imperfection is a glorification of the Creator.

“... but you do not understand their glorification” — it is only by studying the creation and understanding how it works that we can realise how everything glorifies God. Without knowledge we cannot understand their glorification of God. They are obviously not glorifying Allah by repeating *subhan Allah* while counting beads!

*See next page*

## Topic: Abraham

### Chapter 2

260 And when Abraham said, My Lord, show me *how* You give life to the dead, He said: Do you not believe? He said: Yes, *but that my heart may be at ease*. He said: Then take four birds, then tame them to incline to you, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion here is not about how individuals will be raised to life on the Day of Judgment, but how nations will receive spiritual life in this world.

This is a sequel to v. 258, which speaks of the manifestation of Allah's power in the life and death of nations. In the Bible in Genesis 15:8 Abraham is made to say, after receiving a promise of the land of Canaan: "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" The Quranic parallel to this is: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." He believed in the Divine promise, but how would it be fulfilled?

The answer to Abraham's *how* as given in the Quran is a perfectly intelligible parable. If he should take four birds and tame them, they would obey his call and fly to him even from distant mountains. The words "place a part (*juz'*) of them" can only mean *one each of the four birds*. The story of *cutting the birds into pieces*, in connection with this verse, is not traceable to any reliable authority, nor do these words occur here.

To revive a dead people with spiritual truth, from which they are running away like birds, they have to be tamed as one tames birds so that instead of being repelled away from the truth they are attracted towards it even from a great distance. Many nations and people run from Islam in the same way as birds fly off when a person approaches them, because it is perceived as a threat. What must be done is to convince them, mildly, gently and slowly, that it is not a threat. Then, upon being called, they will fly long distances towards it.

Note also that even a prophet as great as Abraham asks to be shown *how* God's promise will be fulfilled, though he has full belief in it. His heart will not be satisfied till he knows how it will happen. This shows that Islam recognizes a person's right to ask for knowledge in order to be satisfied regarding a matter of belief.