

Fast 15: Belief in the Unseen

- Turning back to the verses from ch. 2 under discussion, the first belief mentioned in them is as follows: “who believe in the Unseen”. As mentioned in the last Study, by the “Unseen” is meant God, as indicated in the similar verse, ch. 4 v. 162.

- As the Quran tells us:

“Vision cannot comprehend Him, and He comprehends (all) vision.” — ch. 6, v. 103

لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ

God is thus the greatest of all the unseen things.

- The leaders of the Israelite tribes demanded that Moses show them God:

“And when you said: Moses, we will not believe in you till we see Allah manifestly, so the punishment overtook you while you looked on.” — ch. 2, v. 55 (see also ch. 4, v. 153)

وَأَذَقْتُمُ يُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً
فَأَخَذَتْكُمْ الصَّبَإَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُنظَرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And Moses put their demand to God:

“... he (Moses) said: My Lord, show me so that I may look at You. He said: You cannot see Me, but look at the mountain; if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me. So when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it crumble and Moses fell down fainting. Then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers.” — ch. 7, v. 143

قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۗ قَالَ لَنْ تَرِنِي وَلَكِن
أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرِنِي ۖ
فَلَمَّا تَخَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ بِالْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا
فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Even a manifestation of the glory of God is too overwhelming for man, let alone that in this world God could be seen by the human eye.

- There is a hadith according to which the Holy Prophet Muhammad looked towards the full moon one night and said to his Companions: “Surely you will see your Lord as you see this moon. You will not be hindering each other in looking at Him” (Bukhari, hadith 554 and 573). Of course, this “seeing” will be in the life after death, not in this physical life. Maulana Muhammad Ali comments on this hadith as follows:

“Needless to say, God is not a physical body that can be seen with the physical eyes. The vision which is used to see God is produced by the purity of the mind and is spiritual in nature. The purer and cleaner the heart, the clearer will be the sight of God, just as the reflection of the sun in a glass is brighter if the glass is cleaner. Just as millions of mirrors can all have in them the reflection of the sun at the same time without hindering each other’s light, similarly millions of people can have full sight of God in their hearts at one and the same time without coming in each other’s way.”

- The unseen may be taken more generally. The human soul (*nafs*) is unseen. It is taken from all human beings at death:

“Allah takes souls at the time of death”
— ch. 39, v. 42

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا

“Yield up your souls” — ch. 6, v. 93

أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

“O soul, you who is at rest, return to your Lord” — ch. 89, v. 27–28

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ

The first verse above applies to everyone. In the second, evil doers are addressed. In the third, the most righteous. But no one has ever seen the soul leaving the body.

- Yet great care has to be taken of this unseen soul:

“Say: O people, the Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of **his own soul**; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment.” — ch. 10, v. 108

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۗ

“Whoever does good, it is for the good of **his own soul**; and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment. And your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.” — ch. 41, v. 46

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۗ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

This shows that belief in the unseen includes belief in the existence of the invisible soul and in its progress and development.

- This unseen soul has been made perfect and the sense of right and wrong has been planted in it. It is the duty of the possessor of the soul to make it develop by doing acts of goodness, and not to neglect it:

“And the soul and its perfection! So He reveals to it its way of evil and its way of good; he is indeed successful who causes it to grow, and he indeed fails who buries it.” — ch. 91, v. 7–10

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ۚ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۗ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۗ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ۗ

- In the passage from ch. 2 that we are discussing, after “who believe in the Unseen”, it is stated: “and keep up prayer” (ch. 2, v. 3). Prayer is the means of putting one unseen, that is to say the human soul, in touch with the greatest Unseen, God.