

## Paths of Maʿrifah: Reason and Sensation

### FIRST: CONCEPTS RELATING TO Maʿrifah

#### 1) The concept of maʿrifah

THE ROOT ʿ-*q-l* refers to an impediment in something. Al-Khalīl contrasted the ʿ*aql* to ignorance. The verb is ʿ*aqalal*yaʿ*qilu*, the verbal noun being ʿ*aql* (plural, ʿ*uqūl*). The active participle ʿ*āqil* means reasonable, sensible, prudent and the like, its plurals being ʿ*uqalā*ʾ and ʿ*āqilūn*. An intensified form of ʿ*āqil* is ʿ*aqūl*, meaning endowed with exceptional understanding and intellect. The passive participle *maʿqūl* means intelligible, reasonable, and understandable, while the noun ʿ*āqilah* refers to a clan whose members share the burden of paying the blood money for the tribe if one of its members is guilty of unintentional homicide. The ʿ*āqilah* would consist of the cousins of the person who had committed the murder. The term *maʿqil* (plural, *maʿāqil*) refers to a stronghold or fortress, while charity (*ṣadaqah*) has sometimes been referred to with the term ʿ*iqāl*, which is a rope used to hobble a camel. Renowned grammarian al-Aṣmaʿī stated that when attributed to the gazelle, the verb ʿ*aqala* is used to mean that the gazelle was stranded (as on a mountain). Similarly, if food has caused someone constipation, it may be said that *al-ṭaʿām ʿaqala baṭnahū*, while the phrase *uʿtuqila lisānu fulān* means that so-and-so's tongue was tied.

When used in the sense of mind, intelligence, or reason, the word ʿ*aql* has numerous denotations. It can mean, for example, knowledge of the nature of things, be they good or bad, beautiful or ugly, perfect or imperfect. Similarly, it might refer to the ability to recognize which of two goods is better, and which of two evils is worse. The passive participle *maʿqūl*, meaning reasonable or intelligible, refers to what has been retained in one's heart or understanding. Reason or intelligence is

referred to as *‘aql* because it is what restrains you (*ya‘qiluka*) from surrendering to your cravings and appetites, just as a *‘iqāl* – a cord used to hobble a camel – restrains and limits the camel’s movement. Similarly, it restrains (*ya‘qilu*) the tongue, thereby preventing its owner from uttering careless, harmful words out of ignorance and error.

Derivatives of the root *‘-q-l* occur 49 times in the Qur’an. There is no occurrence of the noun *‘aql*. However, the root appears repeatedly in various verbal forms: *‘aqalūhu* (once), *ta‘qilūn* and *ya‘qilūn* (46 times), *na‘qilu* (once), and *ya‘qiluhā* (once). The interrogative phrase *afalā ta‘qilūn* appears 13 times. Examples of these occurrences include: *Sūrah al-Mu‘minūn*, 23:80 which, after pointing to God’s power over life and death and “the alternation of night and day,” asks its listeners, “Will you not, then, use your reason (*afalā ta‘qilūn*)?” In *Sūrah al-Naḥl*, 16:67 God reminds us of the nourishment He provides through “date-palms and vines.” He then adds that in these things “there is a message indeed for people who use their reason” (*inna fī dhālika la āyatan li qawmin ya‘qilūn*; cf. 16:13) Likewise, *Sūrah al-Mā‘idah*, 5:58 states that certain people who mock the call to prayer “do not use their reason” (*lā ya‘qilūn*; cf. *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:22). In other words, their intelligence does nothing to deter them from engaging in morally reprehensible behavior. It has also been suggested that this verse is saying that they fail to realize the reward they would enjoy if they obeyed God and His Messenger. The fact that they “do not use their reason” does not mean that they have no intelligence or understanding, however. Rather, it means simply that they are failing to respond to God’s call due either to pride or to a lack of conviction. The evidence against them stands, however, since, despite their lack of conviction, they do understand the message they have heard.

Philosophers and ethicists view the mind as a non-material essence that is nevertheless associated with matter in the course of its operation. The expressive entity to which each of us refers as “I”, the mind has been described as a light in the heart that recognizes truth and falsehood. In sum, the *‘aql* may be described variously as: (1) the attribute that distinguishes human beings from other living creatures, (2) the capacity by which we recognize the possibility of what is possible, and the impossibility of what is impossible, (3) knowledge gleaned from

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experience, and (4) an instinctive force by means of which a person is able to squelch cravings for immediate gratification, but which differs in strength from one person to another.

### 2) *The concept of ḥajr*

The trilateral root ḥ-j-r denotes the act of hindering, detaining, prohibiting, or denying access to something. One might state that a ruler ḥajar <sup>ʿ</sup>alā al-safīh, that is, he denied a legally incompetent person access to his wealth and forbade him to dispose of it. The mind is sometimes referred to with the word ḥijr, since it acts to restrain a person from behaving in an unseemly manner. Found only once in the Qur'an, this use of the word ḥijr occurs in *Sūrah al-Fajr*, 89:5, which refers to those “endowed with reason” (*dhī ḥijr*). Hence, the roots <sup>ʿ</sup>a-q-l and ḥ-j-r share in common the denotation of restraining and holding back.

### 3) *The concept of nuhā*

The root n-h-y denotes: (1) the reaching of a goal or end, and (2) prohibition or restraint. The noun *nuhyah* (plural, *nuhā*) is used to refer to reason or the mind because it restrains us from engaging in shameful actions. It has been suggested that another reason the mind is referred to with the word *nuhyah* is that reason (*al-ʿaql*) causes one to stop (*yantahī*, derived from *nahā*) at what God has commanded rather than exceeding the limits He has set. The word *nuhyah* can thus be seen to be related to the noun *nihāyah*, meaning end or limit. Similarly, the verb *anhālyunhī* (verbal noun, *inhāʾ*) may be used synonymously with *ablghal/yublighu* (verbal noun, *iblāgh*), meaning to transmit or conduct something to a termination point. The adjective *manhāh* is used to describe someone who is sensible and insightful. Alternate forms of this adjective include *nahī* and *nahin* (plural, *nahīn*).

Derivatives of the root n-h-y occur twice in the Qur'an. *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:54 declares that Nature holds messages “for those who are endowed with reason” (*li ʿulī al-nuhā*). Only those who use their reason benefit from these messages, since only they take them to heart; only they comprehend the rational evidence God has placed in the natural world for the reality of the resurrection of the dead. Such evidence is found in the way plants are brought back to life after the earth “dies”

during the winter months, and in the way God brought us into being out of nothing. In short, people's minds (*al-nuhā*) act to restrain them (*tanhāhum*) from unseemly comport, and stop (*tantahī*) at the limits God has set for them.

#### 4) *The concept of qalb*

The root *q-l-b* has two primary denotations: (1) the essence or best part of something, and (2) to reverse, topple, or overturn. From the first denotation we derive the noun *qalb* (plural, *qulūb*), or heart, which is viewed as the purest, highest and most genuine part of something. From the second we derive the verb *qalaba*, meaning to overturn or turn inside out.

The noun *qalb* occurs 132 times in the Qur'an. Used to refer to the mind, we find the term in *Sūrah Qāf*, 50:37, which tells us that the Qur'an is "a reminder for everyone whose heart is wide-awake" (*li man kāna lahu qalb*), or, as Yusuf Ali renders it, "for any that has a heart and understanding." *Sūrah al-Hashr*, 59:14 describes the foes against which the Muslim community was fighting with the words, "their hearts are at odds [with one another]" (*qulūbuhum shattā*). So, although the word *qalb* can refer to the physical organ located in the left half of the thoracic cavity, it is used figuratively in the Qur'an to refer to a person's emotions, thoughts and feelings. The word *qalb* is also used to refer to the seat of reason, knowledge, courage, fear and illness, while the word *ṣadr*, meaning chest, has been used to refer to the seat of cravings, desires, caprice, whim, anger, and the like.

The Qur'an describes the heart in many ways. It speaks of the heart as capable of rancor; of soundness or illness (*Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:52; *Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt*, 37:84 and *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb*, 33:32), pride and overbearingness (*Sūrah Ghāfir*, 40:35), repentance (*Sūrah Qāf*, 50:33), sin and righteousness (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:283, *Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn*, 83:14), mercy and harshness (*Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:159; *Sūrah al-Ḥadīd*, 57:27); tranquility (*Sūrah al-Ra'd*, 13:28), terror (*Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:151), understanding (*Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:25; *Sūrah al-Ḥajj*, 22:46), blindness (*Sūrah al-Ḥajj*, 22:46), revulsion (*Sūrah al-Zumar*, 39:45); denial (*Sūrah al-Naḥl*, 16:22), trembling (*Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt*, 79:8), listening (*Sūrah al-Taḥrīm*, 66:4), reverence (*Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:2; *Sūrah*

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*al-Hadīd*, 57:16), waywardness (*Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:7; *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:117), regret (*Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:156), hardness (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:74; *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:13), hypocrisy (*Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:77); skepticism and faith (*Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:45; *Sūrah al-Mujādalah*, 58:22), and God-consciousness (*Sūrah al-Hajj*, 22:32; *Sūrah al-Hujurāt*, 49:3). It speaks of God sealing or closing hearts (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:7, *Sūrah al-A'raf*, 7:101; *Sūrah Muḥammad*, 47:24), testing hearts (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 3:154); unifying hearts (*Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:63); and strengthening hearts (*Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:10). From this sampling of references it will be apparent that the heart (*qalb*) is spoken of in the Qur'an as the seat of thought and emotion, knowledge and faith, as well as that of ignorance and suspicion, doubt and hypocrisy.

### 5) The concept of *lubb*

The root *l-b-b* conveys two primary meanings: (1) that of remaining, abiding, and steadfastness, and (2) purity, goodness, inner essence. The verb *alabbayyulibbu* means to stay or remain (verbal noun, *ilbāb*), while the phrase *labbayka* which pilgrims in Makkah address to God has been interpreted to mean, "I will remain steadfastly obedient to You." As for the second meaning, it yields derivatives such as *lubb*, which means the essence, gist, or best part of something – hence, also, the mind or heart. From it we derive the adjective *labīb*, meaning intelligent and understanding, and the noun *labbah*, which refers to the upper part of the chest.

The *lubb* is reason purged of all impurities and steeped in the highest human ideals. Hence, every *lubb* may be classified as a *‘aql*, but not every *‘aql* qualifies as a *lubb*. The function of the *lubb* in the Qur'an is to convey a reminder that leads to inner purity, openness to the lessons God has to teach us, and obedience to God's commands. The plural *albāb* occurs 16 times in the Qur'an in a reference to those with acute God-consciousness and discerning, willing hearts and minds. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:7, for example, speaks of those who believe in God's revelation and who say, "...The whole [of the divine writ] is from our Sustainer." To this the Qur'an adds that no one bears this truth in mind but "those who are endowed with insight" (*ūlū al-albāb*). Those

referred to in the Qur'an as *ulū al-albāb* are mentioned in four places in connection with God-consciousness (see, for example, *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:179). In ten places, *ulū al-albāb* are mentioned in association with mindfulness or remembrance (see, for example, *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:269; *Sūrah al-Ra'd*, 13:19; *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:100), and in *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:111, their mention is associated with "a lesson" (*ibrāh*) addressed to them. In *Sūrah Ghāfir*, 40:54, we are told that the revelations God has sent down are meant "as a [means of] guidance and a reminder for those who were endowed with insight" (*hudan wa dhikra li ulī al-albāb*). After giving details concerning the "law of retribution" (*al-qīṣāṣ*), *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:178-179 addresses those who are "endowed with insight" (*ulī al-albāb*), assuring them that this law is a source of life for people. Only *ulī al-albāb* have the discernment to understand that, despite the harshness of the law of retribution, it embodies divine wisdom and mercy because, by virtue of the fear it instills in people's hearts, it deters them from wrongdoing.

#### 6) *The concept of fū'ād*

The root *f-'d* denotes fever, heat and intensity. Thus we might say, *f'adtu al-laḥm*, "I roasted the meat." The heart is sometimes referred to by the noun *fū'ād* due to its warmth, the while the noun *mif'ad* refers to a metal skewer on which meat is roasted. The verb *ifta'ada/yafta'idu* means to be afflicted with a fearful heart.

The term *fū'ād*, which is consistently employed in a positive sense, occurs sixteen times in the Qur'an in the sense of 'heart' (*qalb*). There has been some disagreement as to what the word *fū'ād* means specifically in relation to the *qalb*, with some linguists holding that the *qalb* is located inside the *fū'ād* (in other words, that the word *fū'ād* refers to the membrane surrounding the *qalb*), and others holding that the *fū'ād* refers to the center of the *qalb*. Using the plural *af'idah*, the Qur'an declares God to be the One who has endowed human beings with "hearing, and sight, and hearts" (*al-sam'a wa al-abṣāra wa al-af'idah*) (*Sūrah al-Mulk*, 67:23; cf. *Sūrah al-Naḥl*, 16:78).

#### 7) *The concept of ṣadr*

The root *ṣ-d-r* conveys two basic meanings. The first of these is the act

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of coming away from a water source (*al-ṣudūr* 'an *al-mā'*) after drinking (as opposed to *al-wird*, the act of coming to water to drink). The second is the chest (*ṣadr*, plural, *ṣudūr*). Used figuratively, the noun *ṣadr* refers to the highest or most anterior part of something.

The word *ṣadr* occurs 44 times in the Qur'an in figurative reference to the human chest, or bosom, as the seat of the will, the passions, faith, unbelief, and knowledge. Qur'anic uses of the word *qalb* refer to the locus of reason and knowledge; its uses of the word *ṣadr* likewise refer to the seat of reason and knowledge; however, the *ṣadr* is also portrayed as the locus of emotions and inward states such as desire, passion, rage, fear and terror. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:154 tells the Muslim community that God had allowed certain trials and temptations in order to “test... and purge (*li yumaḥḥisa*) what is in your hearts (*mā fī qulūbikum*),” since, it goes on to say, “for God is aware of what is in the hearts [of men]” (*dhāt al-ṣudūr*). The fact that both terms – *qulūb* and *ṣudūr* – are used here indicates a distinction between them in terms of function. The Qur'an speaks of God's testing and purging people's hearts (*qulūb*) as the loci of intelligence, discernment and recollection based on what has been stored in their bosoms (*ṣudūr*) by way of surrender to God or unbelief. *Sūrah al-Ankabūt*, 29:10 asks rhetorically, “Is not God fully aware of what is in the hearts of all creatures? (*ṣudūr al-ālamīn*)?” The *ṣadr* as the locus of faith or unbelief is spoken of in *Sūrah al-Naḥl*, 16:106, according to which a person can open his or her heart (*ṣadr*) to unbelief (*kufr*). Similarly, it is into people's bosoms (*ṣudūr al-nās*) that deceptive, evil promptings are ‘whispered’ by the Tempter (*Sūrah al-Nās*, 114:4-5). *Sūrah al-Ankabūt*, 29:49 tells us that the Qur'an consists of clear messages (*āyātun bayyināt*) that make their way into the hearts (*ṣudūr*) of those who have been endowed with knowledge (*alladhīn ūtū al-ilm*).

### 8) *The concept of fiqh*

The root *f-q-h* refers to the act of comprehending. The verb is *faqaḥa/yafaqahu* and the verbal noun is *fiqh*. On one level, all knowledge, or *ilm*, is a kind of *fiqh*, or understanding. However, the word *fiqh* has come to be associated particularly with knowledge of Islamic Law and the proper distinctions between the permitted and the prohibited, truth and falsehood.

The verbal form of the root *f-q-h* occurs 20 times in the Qur'an in a sense that is narrower than that of *‘ilm*. *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:91 reports the words of the people of the prophet Shu‘ayb, who said to him, “O Shu‘ayb! We cannot grasp the purport of much of what you say” (*mā nafqahu kathīran mimmā taqūl*) (cf. *Sūrah al-Isrā’*, 17:44; *Sūrah Tāhā*, 20:28, *Sūrah al-Nisā’*, 4:78; and *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:87). It has been suggested that the meaning of the phrase *mā nafqahu* here means not that they did not understand the meaning of what Shu‘ayb was saying but, rather, that they were not convinced by it. For had they not understood it, they would not have been held accountable for their rejection of him. The basis for accountability is simply that one understand the prophet’s message, not that one be persuaded by it. The act of *fiqh* is attributed to the *qalb*; this may be seen in *Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, 7:179, which condemns people “who have hearts with which they fail (or, rather, refuse) to grasp the truth” (*lahum qulūbun lā yafqahūna bihā*). (See also *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:127 and *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, 6:25).

Lastly, the verb form *tafaqqah* is used to refer to the pursuit of knowledge, particularly of one’s religion. *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:122 contains an exhortation to Muslims to familiarize themselves with Islamic legal rulings, to share this knowledge with others, and to warn them of the dangers of failing to comply with them.

### 9) *The concept of fahm*

The root *f-h-m* denotes the act of understanding and seeing something as it really is. The verb is *fahimalyafhamu* (verbal noun, *fahm*); the derivative form of the verb *tafahammalyatafahhamu* (verbal noun, *tafahhum*) means to come to understand something gradually or in stages, and the intensive form *fahhamalyufahhimu* means to cause someone else to understand. This intensive verb form, which takes both a direct and an indirect object, is found in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā’*, 21:79: “We made Solomon understand the case [more profoundly] (*fahhamnāhā sulaymān*).” We are told in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā’*, 21:79 that God endowed Solomon with unique understanding of a case on which he and his father David were ruling. The word *fahm* has likewise been understood to mean a precise, nuanced grasp of something. In other words, there are varying levels of understanding or comprehension,

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and not everything that is understood is known. Rather, one might reach a certain level of understanding via speculation or guesswork.

### 10) *The concept of iḥāṭah*

The root ḥ-w-ṭ denotes the act of guarding about, protecting, preserving, watching over, surrounding, and taking responsibility for. From this root we derive the active participle, ḥā'it, which refers to a wall (plural, ḥiṭān). In conjunction with the preposition bi, the verb form aḥāṭalyuhītu is used 23 times in the Qur'an in the following senses: (1) Knowing or comprehending. *Sūrah al-Jinn*, 72:28 tells us that God “encompasses [with His knowledge] all that they had [to say]” (*aḥāṭa bi mā ladayhim*), while *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:255 affirms that human beings cannot encompass any of God's knowledge apart from His will (*lā yuhīṭūna bi shay'in min 'ilmihī illā bi mā shā'*) (cf. *Sūrah Yūnus*, 10:39; *Sūrah al-Kahf*, 18:68; and *Sūrah al-Naml*, 27:22). (2) Encompassing. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:19 tells us that “God encompasses [with His might] all who deny the truth” (*muḥīṭun bil-kāfirīn*) (cf. *Sūrah Fuṣṣilat*, 41:54). (3) Destruction. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:81 tells us that the unrepentant on Judgment Day will be encompassed (i.e., destroyed) by their sins (*aḥāṭat bihi khatī'atuhu*) (cf. *Sūrah al-Kahf*, 18:29, 42; and *Sūrah al-Ankabūt*, 29:54).

### 11) *The concept of tamḥīṣ*

The root m-ḥ-ṣ denotes an act of purifying, testing, examination or refinement. The verb is maḥṣalyamḥaṣu (verbal noun, maḥṣ), or maḥḥaṣalyumahḥiṣu (verbal noun, tamḥīṣ). The verb maḥḥaṣa occurs twice in the Qur'an. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:141 tells us that God tests people with both bad fortune and good in order to “render pure of all dross those who have attained to faith” (*li yumahḥiṣa Allāhu al-ladhīna āmanū*). Similarly, God declares to the Muslim community in *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:154 that “[all this befell you] so that God might...render your innermost hearts pure of all dross” (*li yumahḥiṣa mā fī qulūbikum*). Hence, by testing believers through affliction and suffering, God purifies them of their sins and faults.

12) *The concept of tamyīz*

The root *m-y-z* denotes the separation of one thing from another. From this root we derive the verb *māzalyamīzu* (*mayz*) and *mayyazal yumayyizu* (*tamyīz*). The verb *mayyaza* means to prefer someone or something over another, to set apart or isolate. The verbal noun *tamyīz* refers to the faculty of discernment – the mind’s ability to recognize distinctions and similarities among entities. Muslim jurists define the age of discernment as the age at which one can distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful.

The verbal form of this root occurs in four places in the Qur’an, including *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:37, which tells us that when judging human beings after death, God will “separate the bad from the good” (*yamīza Allāhu al-khabītha min al-ṭayyib*), and *Sūrah Yāsīn*, 36:59, where we are told that on the Day of Judgment God will say to those who had rejected Him, “...stand aside today, O you who were lost in sin!” (*imtāzū ayyuhā al-mujrimūn*).

13) *The concept of tafakkur*

The root *f-k-r* denotes the act of meditating, pondering, reflecting on, or examining over and over. From it we derive the verbs *fakkaral yufakkiru* (*tafkīr*), meaning to think or cogitate, and *tafakkaral yatafakkaru* (*tafakkur*), meaning to reflect or ponder on evidence or phenomena toward the formation of an image, understanding or conceptualization. The intensive adjective *fikkīr* describes someone who is thoughtful and meditative. However, due to the process of change that is involved in *tafakkur*, it is not attributable to God in His immutability.

Verbal derivatives of the root *f-k-r* occur eighteen times in the Qur’an, while the Qur’anic concepts of *tadhakkur*, *tadabbur*, *ta’ammul*, *istibṣār*, and *i’tibār* share some common features with that of *tafakkur*. *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:191 commends those who keep God in mind throughout the day and night, and who thus “reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth” (*wa yatafakkarūn fī khalqī al-samāwāti wa al-arḍ*). Similarly, the Qur’an urges us to give thought to the variety in people’s races, languages and cultures, deriving as they do from one Single Source. *Sūrah al-Rūm*, 30:21 declares: “And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own

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kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you: in this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think (*inna fī dhālika la āyātīn li qawmin yatafakkarūn!*)” Hence, the phenomena of reproduction, marriage and loving companionship shared by husbands and wives are presented as topics for reverent reflection.

Other references to the act of reflection are found in *Sūrah al-Rūm*, 30:8, which asks concerning people who have no awareness of things ultimate, “Have they never learned to think for themselves (*alam yatafakkarū?*)?” In *Sūrah al-Aʿrāf*, 7:176, the Prophet is urged to tell people stories that convey spiritual lessons “so that they might take thought” (*laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*). *Sūrah al-Ḥashr*, 59:21 tells us, in a similar vein, that God compares the power of the Qur’an with that of a force that breaks even mountains asunder. To this He adds, “And [all] such parables We propound unto men, so that they might [learn to] think” (*laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*).”

### 14) *The concept of tadabbur*

The root *d-b-r* denotes the end, final part, or rear of something. From it we derive the noun *dubur* (the opposite of *qubul*), which refers to the rear part or back side of something. The intensified verb *dabbaralyudabbiru* (*tadbīr*) means to manage, organize, dispose of, or bring about. It can also refer to the act of freeing a slave after his/her death (literally, “from behind”, *min dubur*). As for the verb *tadabbaralyatadabbaru* (*tadabbur*), it denotes the act of thinking about or investigating something’s final outcomes or ultimate consequences.

Derivatives of the root *d-b-r* occur 46 times in the Qur’an in the following senses: (1) Back. In *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:15, God commands the Muslim fighters to stand their ground against the polytheists, saying, “do not turn your backs on them” (*lā tuwallūhum al-adbār*). In the following verse (8:16), God warns them that any of them who “turns his back on them” (*yuwallīhim... duburahu*) in flight will earn God’s condemnation. The same sense of the word is used figuratively in *Sūrah Muḥammad*, 47:25, which describes those who have rejected God’s message delivered through Muhammad as those who have turned their backs (*alladhīn irtaddū ʿalā adbārihim*) on the truth. (3) The end of

something. *Sūrah Qāf*, 50:40 urges believers to extol God’s glory “at every prayer’s end” or “after the postures of adoration” (*adbār al-sujūd*). (4) Departing, receding into the past. *Sūrah al-Muddaththir*, 74:33 urges us to consider “the night when it departs (*al-layli idh adbara*).” (5) The last part of something. *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, 6:45 speaks of how “the last remnant of those folk who had been bent on evildoing was wiped out” (*quṭī‘a dābir al-qawmi alladhīna ḡalamū*). (6) Reflection or contemplation. *Sūrah al-Nisā’* 4:82 asks whether people “reflect on the Qur’an” (*afalā yatadabbarūn al-qu’rān*). (See also *Sūrah Muḡammad*, 47:24). (7) Management, disposal, governance. *Sūrah Yūnus*, 10:31 tells us that it is God Who “governs all that exists” (*yudabbiru al-amr*). (See *Sūrah al-Sajdah*, 32:5, *Sūrah al-Mu‘minūn*, 23:68, and *Sūrah Ṣād*, 38:29).

#### 15) *The concept of tadhakkur*

The trilateral root *dh-k-r* denotes several meanings: (1) male (*dhakar*) as opposed to female (*unthā*), (2) remembering (*dhikr*) as opposed to forgetting (*nisyān*), from which we derive the related meaning of mentioning or invocation (*dhikr*), which is a kind of remembrance with the tongue, and (3) honor, renown or good repute. Other derivatives of this root include the verbs *dhakkara*, to remind (verbal noun, *tadhkīr*), *dhākara* (*mudhākarah*) and *istadhkara* (*istidhkār*), meaning to study or recall, and the noun *tadhkirah* (a memento or keepsake, i.e., something that triggers or preserves a memory).

Derivatives of this root occur approximately 274 times in the Qur’an, and in the following senses: (1) A divine message or reminder. The Qur’an is spoken of in *Sūrah Ṣād*, 38:87 as “a reminder to all the worlds” (*dhikrun li al-‘ālamīn*). (See also *Sūrah al-Anbiyā’*, 21:24; and *Sūrah al-Qamar*, 54:25), (2) the Qur’anic revelation (*Sūrah al-Hijr*, 15:9). (3) Pre-Qur’anic revelation (the revelations given to Jews and Christians). The Prophet is told by God to tell those who deny the truth to “ask the followers of earlier revelation” (*is‘alū ahl al-dhikr*) for greater understanding (*Sūrah al-Anbiyā’*, 21:7). (4) The revelation to Moses. This sense of the word *dhikr* is found in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā’*, 21:105, which speaks of the Psalms (*al-zabūr*) having come “after the Message (given to Moses)” (*ba‘di al-dhikri*). (5) Admonition, reminder,

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or warning. This sense of the word *dhikr* is found in *Sūrah Ṣād*, 38:1, which describes the Qur'an as being "full of admonition" (*dhī al-dhikr*, Abdullah Yusuf Ali; cf. the verbal form used in *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:44). (6) Remembrance of God. Believers are told in *Sūrah al-Jum'ah*, 62:9 to "hasten to the remembrance of God (*fas'aw ilā dhikr Allāh*)" when they hear the call to prayer (cf. *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:124; *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:135; *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4:103; *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:152). (7) Honor or eminence. God tells the Prophet in *Sūrah al-Zukhruf*, 43:44 to hold fast the revelation he has been given, because it will be "[a source of] eminence for you and your people" (*dhikrun laka wa li qawmika*). (8) To mention. In *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:42, we are told that Joseph asked a fellow prisoner who would soon be freed to "mention me to your master" (*udhkurnī 'inda rabbika*). (9) To observe, remember, or bear in mind. The Children of Israel were exhorted to "bear in mind" what was contained in the revelation they had received through Moses (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:63; *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:24; *Sūrah al-Nūr*, 24:1; *Sūrah al-Zumar*, 39:27). This sense of the word is also found in *Sūrah Ghāfir*, 40:44, where, after admonishing his people for their rejection of God's message, a certain believer in the time of Moses warned his hearers of the Day of Judgment. To this he added, "at that time you will remember (*sa tadhkurūna*) what I am telling you (*mā aqūlu lakum*)."

The verb *tadhakkur*, meaning "bear in mind" is often paired with the phrase "those endowed with insight" (*ūlū al-albāb*). For this pairing, see, for example, *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:269; *Sūrah al-Rād*, 13:19; and *Sūrah Ṣād*, 38:29.

The word *dhikr* has been understood in different senses due to the way its meaning is specified by its various Qur'anic contexts. As we have seen, the word *dhikr* is used variously to refer to obedience, admonition, the Qur'an, elucidation, mentioning, reflection or contemplation. The act of remembering (*tadhakkur*) is an attempt to recover images stored in one's memory. Especially when one is remembering God, this process brings one into closer touch with his or her environment. As we saw in *Sūrah al-A'rāf*, 7:201, the act of bringing God to mind gives one a clearer perception of one's surroundings. In this context, the concept of *dhikr* is contrasted with unawareness,

forgetfulness and oblivion. Remembering (*tadhakkur*) is similar to reflection (*tafakkur*), since reflection involves the contemplation of what one knows, while remembering involves the summoning of knowledge that one needs to be mindful of after a time of unawareness or forgetfulness. As we read in *Sūrah al-Aʿrāf*, 7:201, when those who are conscious of God are assailed by an evil thought, they “bring God to remembrance (*tadhakkarū*)” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali), and in so doing, are able to see the world around them more clearly (*fa idhā hum mubṣirūn*). The act of remembering (*tadhakkur*) confirms, preserves, and renders more effective the knowledge one already possesses, while the act of reflecting (*tafakkur*) may increase knowledge as well. The Qur’anic contexts in which the various forms of the word *tadhakkur* occur have to do with the clarification of matters of doctrine, comparisons between those with faith and those who deny the truth, reflection on final outcomes (judgment, resurrection), and self-examination. As mentioned, the verb *tadhakkar* is often associated with the phrase *ulī al-albāb*, translated by Asad as “those endowed with insight,” and by Abdullah Yusuf Ali as “men [sic] of understanding” (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:269 and *Sūrah al-Raʿd*, 13:19).

#### 16) *The concept of ḥifẓ*

The trilateral root *ḥ-f-ẓ* denotes the act of preserving or observing. It is used in the sense of memorization, which serves to preserve knowledge, as well as in relation to the preservation of life, safety, food, and so on. One of the Divine Names is *al-Ḥafīẓ*, the Preserver, the One whose notice nothing escapes on earth or in the heavenly realms, while angels are sometimes referred to as *hafaẓah*, meaning guardians or caretakers who enumerate and record people’s thoughts and actions.

Derivatives of the root *ḥ-f-ẓ* occur 44 times in the Qur’an, and in the following senses: (1) Entrusting to someone’s care. *Sūrah al-Māʾidah*, 5:44 tells us that some of God’s messages had been entrusted to people’s care (*ustuhfizū min kitābi Allāh*). (2) Guarding, preserving, protecting. *Sūrah al-Nisāʾ*, 4:34 speaks of righteous women who guard the privacy of their conjugal lives, while *Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt* 37:7 uses the noun *ḥifẓ* in relation to God’s protection of the heavenly spheres. In *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:12, Joseph’s brothers promise to protect him, saying,

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“We shall guard him well” (*innā lahu la ḥāfiẓūn*; cf. 12:63). And in *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:55, Joseph promises to take good care of Egypt’s resources, saying, “Behold, I shall be a good and knowing keeper” (*innī ḥāfiẓun ‘alīm*). (3) Witnessing and recording. The phrase *ḥāfiẓīn kirāman kātibīn*, which translates literally as “noble preservers who record” refers to the angels God has appointed to watch over people and record their thoughts and actions (*Sūrah al-Infīṭār*, 82:10-11).

Preservation (*ḥifẓ*) is one of the primary functions of the human mind, which stores knowledge through memory, while memory is one measure of a person’s intelligence. As such, the process of *ḥifẓ* refers to the establishment of what has been understood in one’s mind lest it be forgotten and lost. This process is followed by emotive response (*shu‘ūr*) and understanding, which is followed in turn by remembering and reflection. God condemns those who simply memorize without understanding, likening them to “an ass that carries a load of books” (*Sūrah al-Jum‘ah*, 62:5). Similarly acquiring knowledge without memorization is like building an edifice on a steep precipice from which it is liable to slide at any moment into the abyss.

### 17) *The concept of wa‘y*

The trilateral root w-‘y denotes the act of holding or containing. Used figuratively, the verb *wa‘ā* refers to the act of retaining something in memory, hence, knowing it or being aware of it. The verbal noun *wa‘y*, generally translated as “consciousness,” refers to the heart’s or mind’s act of containing or preserving something, while the adjective *wa‘iyyun* means knowledgeable, astute and understanding.

Derivatives of this root occur seven times in the Qur’an in the following senses: (1) A container. *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:76 refers to the travel bags of Joseph’s brothers with the word *aw‘iyatihim*, and to his brother Benjamin’s bag with the singular *wi‘ā*. (2) Concealment. *Sūrah al-Inshiqāq*, 84:22-23 tells us that God is fully aware of what those who deny the truth “conceal” (*yū‘ūn*). (3) Reflection and contemplation. *Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah*, 69:12 describes the great flood that occurred during the time of Noah as a message which “every wide-awake ear might consciously take in” (*ta‘iyahā udhnun wā‘iyah*). (4) Withholding. *Sūrah al-Ma‘ārij*, 70:18 uses the verb *aw‘ā* to refer to the withholding of wealth that one has amassed.

18) *The concept of wijdān*

The trilateral root *w-j-d* denotes several different meanings. One of these is to find in the sense of reaching something one has sought. Another is to find in the sense of discovering or perceiving, as in, “I found Zayd [to be] generous and noble” (*wajadtu zaydan karīman*). Used in this sense, the verb *wajada* takes a double object.

Derivatives of the root *w-j-d* occur in 106 places in the Qur’an, and in two primary senses: (1) Discovery. We are told in *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:37 that whenever Zachariah visited Mary in the sanctuary, he “found her provided with food” (*wajada ‘indahā rizqan*).” Similarly, we read in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:96 that although certain individuals claim to have a blissful afterlife awaiting them, “you will most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people...” (*la tajidannahum aḥraṣ al-nāsi ‘alā ḥayāh*). A similar sense is found in *Sūrah al-Mā‘idah*, 5:104 where we are told that when the polytheists of the Prophet’s day were urged to respond to his message, they said, “Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing (*ḥasbunā mā wajadnā ‘alayhi ābā’anā*).”

19) *The concept of nisyān*

The root *n-s-y* denotes two basic meanings. The first is that of forgetting as opposed to remembering or memorizing something, while the second is that of omitting or leaving out. The trilateral verb is *nasiyal/yansā*, while the verbal noun is *nisyān*.

Derivatives of the root *n-s-y* occur 45 times in the Qur’an in two basic senses: (1) being unaware of or oblivious to, and (2) omitting or neglecting. The first sense denotes the opposite of remembering, and from this we derive the adjective *nasī* (forgetful, oblivious), and *nisyān* (forgetting, oblivion). *Nisyān* has been described as the absence of a mental image from one’s conscious mind, although it remains somewhere deep in the memory. The act of forgetting, or *nisyān* is condemned by God in the Qur’an in both of these senses, although it sometimes occurs unintentionally, in which case it may be excused. When the act of *nisyān* is attributed to God, it denotes conscious abandonment. In *Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, 7:51, for example, God declares that just as deniers of the truth were heedless of Him during their earthly lives,

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“so We shall be oblivious of them today (*fa al-yawma nansāhum*) as they were oblivious of (*kamā nasū*) the coming of this their Day [of Judgment] (*liqā'a yawmihim hādhā*).” Another example of the use of this root is found in *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:115, where God states, “Indeed, long ago did We impose Our commandment on Adam (*wa laqad 'ahidnā ilā ādama min qablu*); but he forgot [it] (*fa nasiya*).”

### 20) *The concept of sahw*

The trilateral root *s-h-w* refers primarily to inattentiveness and passivity. One might say, for example, *sahawtu 'an al-ṣalāh*, “I was distracted from (or during) the ritual prayer.” Whereas *sahw* denotes a minor and temporary lapse of memory or attentiveness, *nisyān* refers to something's complete absence from consciousness; nevertheless, the two words are sometimes used more or less synonymously. The heedlessness involved in *sahw* is of two types. One type takes place due to factors outside of a person's control, while the other, being born of neglect or rebellion, originates in a person's will. Hence, like *nisyān*, some instances of *sahw* are more blameworthy than others.

The plural active participle, *sāhūn* occurs twice in the Qur'an. *Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:10-11 speaks in condemnation of those who guess blindly about things of which they know nothing and “who blunder along, in ignorance lost” (*hum fī ghamratin sāhūn*), while *Sūrah al-Mā'un*, 107:4-5 chastises those who pray but “whose hearts from their prayer are remote” (*fawaylun lil-muṣallīn alladhīna hum 'an ṣalātihim sāhūn*).

### 21) *The concept of ghafḻah*

The root *gh-f-l* denotes the act of inadvertently neglecting or omitting something. The word *ghafḻah* refers to a failure to perceive or comprehend something despite having the wherewithal to perceive or comprehend it. We would say, *ghafaltu 'an al-shay'* to mean, “I accidentally omitted something,” or “I failed to notice something.” If, on the other hand, we said, *aghfaltuhu*, it would mean that I omitted or neglected something despite its having been mentioned to me. The derivative verbs *taghaffala* and *taghāfala* denote the act of pretending not to have noticed something (in others words, ignoring something deliberately),

while the form *ghaffala* refers to the act of causing someone else to fail to notice something, that is, of concealing it.

Derivatives of this root occur 35 times in the Qur'an in the sense of distraction or lack of attentiveness due to a lack of wakefulness or diligence. In some situations this has occurred as a punishment from God, and sometimes due to a failure of memory. The Qur'an negates inattentiveness of God Himself, saying, "God is not unmindful of what you do!" (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:74; cf. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:99, and *Sūrah al-Mu'minūn*, 23:17).

## 22) The concept of *shakk*

One denotation of the root *sh-k-k* is that of interpenetration. One might say, *shakaktuhu bil-ramḥ*, "I pierced it with the spear." A second denotation is that of a lack of certainty (the verbal noun *shakkun* meaning doubt or suspicion). If we say, *shakka 'alayhi al-amru*, we mean, "The matter was unclear or doubtful to him." A third denotation of the verb *shakka* is to cohere or be interconnected.

The root *sh-k-k* occurs fifteen times in the Qur'an in the sense of uncertainty. We read in *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4:157 that those who disagree about the matter of Jesus' death on the cross are in a state of confusion or doubt about this (*fī shakkīn minhu*). In *Sūrah Yūnus*, 10:94, those who are in doubt concerning (*fī shakkīn mim mā*) the Qur'anic message are exhorted to ask those who received earlier revelations to give them greater understanding. *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:62 relates that after receiving his message, the people to whom the Prophet Ṣāliḥ came told him that they were "in grave doubt" (*fī shakkīn...murīb*) concerning what he was calling them to do. Similarly, *Sūrah Ibrāhīm*, 14:10 asks rhetorically whether there can be "any doubt about [the existence and oneness of] God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?" (*aḥillāhi shakkun, fāṭir al-samāwāti wa al-arḍ*).

## 23) The concept of *rayb*

The trilateral root *r-y-b* denotes suspicion, misgiving and/or alarm. The verbs *rāba/yarību* and *arāba/yurību* mean to disquiet, alarm, or fill with suspicion or misgivings.

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Derivatives of this root occur 37 times in the Qur'an, and in the following senses: (1) Doubt or suspicion. Those involved in financial transactions are urged in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:282 to have a scribe record how much money is owed lest the parties to the transaction have reason to doubt one another (*allā tartābū*). Using the nominal derivative of the root, *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:2 tells us that the divine writ found in the Qur'an is "without doubt" (*lā rayba fīhi*). The word *rayb* is similar to *shakk* in that they both describe mental states characterized by a lack of certainty. However, the verbal derivatives of these roots are used differently. Hence, while we might say, *rābanī al-amru* ("The matter made me uneasy, suspicious"), we cannot use the verb *shakka* in this construction (*shakkanī al-amru*) to convey the same meaning. (2) Distress, regret or disquiet. *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:110 tells us that the transgressions people commit will be "a source of deep disquiet in their hearts" (*rībatan fī qulūbihim*). (3) The vicissitudes of fate. Every reference to the root *r-y-b* in the Qur'an has to do with doubt or uncertainty in the heart with the exception of *Sūrah al-Ṭūr*, 52:30, which refers to the uncertainties of life as *rayb al-manūn*, where the noun *manūn* is a reference to Death or Fate. Specifically, *Sūrah al-Ṭūr*, 52:30 relates the words of skeptics in the Prophet's day, who said, "[He is but] a poet – let us await what time will do unto Him (*rayb al-manūn*)."

### SECOND: SENSATION-RELATED CONCEPTS

All means of perception, outward and inward, innate and acquired, previously acquired information, whether on one's own or from others, as well as certainties that God has revealed through His prophets, contribute to the process of knowledge acquisition. The physical senses are like windows through which the cognitive faculties look out at the world. Hence the first path to knowledge acquisition is through sensory perception. The input received through the senses is recorded, after which the cognitive processes begin as the perceiver forms an image or impression of the entity being perceived.

As has been noted, sensation is the first phase of knowledge acquisition. It represents the first interaction between the knowing subject and the entity to be known. You might smell something without knowing

what it is that you are smelling, or without recognizing the fragrance. Hence, physical perception alone is not cognition. In order for cognition to occur, the conscious mind needs also to be involved in the process. This fact is affirmed by the Qur'an's statement that, "You will see them looking at you, but they see not" (*tarāhum yanẓurūna ilayka wa hum lā yubširūn*) (*Sūrah al-A'raf*, 7:198). The act of looking (*naẓar*) consists in directing one's gaze toward something or someone whereby one's eye receives an image of the person or object being looked at. The physical reception of the image, however, falls short of actual recognition of the person or thing whose image has been recorded. One might look at one of God's prophets, for example, yet without recognizing him as a prophet of God.

The act of looking consists in turning one's eyes toward a visible object. The outcome of this action is that of sight (*ru'yah* or *baṣar*), which may lead to insight (*baṣīrah*), that is, a perception of the inward nature of the entity seen. However, when there is a disagreement about the nature or identity of a person or object seen, this is generally not due to a flaw in the process of sense perception but, rather, due to how sensory data is interpreted. In other words, the conflict exists in the realm of cognition. Otherwise, there would be no basis for either agreement or disagreement, since the basis of our communication is shared access to the same sensory data.

There can be no cognition without formation of a judgment about concrete entities. Without the physical senses, reason has nothing to go on; hence, sensory perception and reason must work together. If the senses are inoperative, reason too will be rendered inoperative.

We read in *Sūrah al-Nahl*, 16:78 that "God has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful." We are told clearly in this verse that human beings come into this world devoid of all knowledge. At the same time, it points to the sources of knowledge God has given us in the form of hearing, vision, and reason. All conceptualization begins with the senses, the most fundamental of which are hearing and sight. The senses of touch, taste, and smell are also God-given, of course; however, they are of less significance epistemologically speaking. One of the first senses that

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come into play after birth is that of touch, which enables the human infant to experience a wide range of physical entities. However, touch is incapable of distinguishing colors and sounds. Sight can distinguish colors, shapes, and numerous other features; hearing can distinguish sounds; and the sense of taste distinguishes flavors of various kinds, especially with the aid of the olfactory glands.

On the level of the intangible, a child gradually develops moral discernment, the ability to distinguish between the possible and the impossible, as well as the ability to generalize such that a judgment that applies to a given entity is seen to apply similarly to another, identical entity. Another insight gained as discernment matures is that opposites cannot coexist in a single entity in the same respect, and that if one of two opposing propositions is true, then the other must be false. These fundamental axioms or intuitive propositions gradually crystallize in a person's mind and, as they do so, he or she becomes able to deduce theoretical knowledge from both self-evident truths and concrete evidence.

### THE ROLE OF SENSATION IN KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

Sensory data alone does not lead to knowledge; it needs the assistance of the mind, or reason, whose roles include those of weighing evidence, analogical reasoning, and generalization. The Qur'an itself presents sensation and sensory data as doors to knowledge. When we are commanded to look both to "the horizons" and to our inner selves for signs of God's existence and majesty we are being told to consider the sensory evidence that we derive from these realms. We experience the world around us via sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, while we receive the words of the Revelation via sight and hearing. At the same time, a rigid division of external realities into the categories of tangible and intangible (the latter being perceptible only through reason) is inaccurate. It should be remembered that the messages brought by the prophets about the world of the unseen (*al-ghayb*), including paradise, hellfire, angels and jinn, are virtually always couched in concrete language which points, in fact, to concrete realities. The same is true of the blessings enjoyed by those in paradise and the torments suffered by

those in hellfire, which are physical and tangible. As we read in *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:96, “I saw what they saw not.” Even the spirit, and the Divine Essence itself, are entities that can be perceived via sight. We are told in *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, 6:103 concerning God that, “No human vision can encompass Him (*lā tudrikuhu al-abṣāru*).” The fact that this verse negates the possibility that human vision can “encompass” (*tudriku*) God is, in itself, an affirmation that some vision, however incomplete, is possible. However, given the fact that such realities are absent from the world of sense perception as we now know it, the Qur’an refers to them as *al-ghayb*, which might be rendered, “the realm of the absent,” as over against *al-shahādah*, or “the realm of the present.”

The reality from which reason acquires its data thus includes not only intangible entities, but, in addition, physical, tangible entities that are perceived through the physical senses. Sensation concerns itself with the realm outside of human beings, as well as their own physical beings (our bodies). This realm encompasses everything that can be heard, seen, smelled, tasted or touched. There is also, as we have seen, an inward sense, which includes feelings of pleasure and pain, joy and sadness, love and hatred, all of which are associated in the Qur’an with the heart (*al-qalb*). It is the heart that reflects on the signs in the cosmos, thus acquiring insight and knowledge, and which then reminds others of the need to engage in the same kind of reflection.

#### THE REALM OF SENSATION

Our senses enable us to experience and examine the things around us and to distinguish them from each other in such a way that we can relate to them in the most appropriate and beneficial ways in meeting life’s challenges. The Creator has endowed our senses with precisely the right degrees of sensitivity; hence, if they were to be altered in some way, our perceptions would cease to work to our benefit, and might actually bring us harm. If our hearing were one hundred times more acute than it is, we would be able to pick up sounds with higher and lower frequencies than those we are able to hear at present, and our world would become a disturbing cacophony. If our vision were sharper we would be able to see worlds that are presently invisible to us, and we

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might well feel overwhelmed by all the things that had suddenly entered our range of vision.

The world of *shahādah*, or “the realm of what is present,” is by definition that which is accessible to the physical senses. If something is not accessible to the senses, it is by definition not part of *‘ālam al-shahādah*. In this case, it might be either in the realm of thought and emotion, or in the realm of the metaphysical, or *al-ghayb*, which is “absent.” This is not to say that *al-ghayb* is not tangible or physical in any way; rather, as we have noted, it has a tangible, material aspect, but it is not accessible to our physical senses as they exist at present. This fact is repeated in various places in the Qur’an. In *Sūrah Qāf*, 50:22, for example God addresses the godless on the Day of Judgment, saying, “You have been unmindful of this [Day of Judgment]; but now We have lifted from you your veil, and sharp is your sight today.” In other words, what is not visible to people’s eyes now will be visible to them on the Day of Resurrection. *Sūrah al-Hāqqah*, 69:38-39 also testifies to this truth in the words, “I call to witness all that you can see, as well as all that you cannot see!”

What follows is an enumeration of Qur’anic concepts and terms that relate to sensation in one way or another:

### 1) *The concept of ḥass*

The root *ḥ-s-s* denotes the following meanings: (1) To kill, from which we derive the passive participle *ḥasīs* (from *maḥsūs*, on the pattern of *maf’ūlfa’il*), which is synonymous with *qatīl*, or slain (from *maqtūl*). (2) The sound made by someone who is suspicious, uncertain, or in pain (*ḥasīs*). (3) To sense, feel, see, know or be aware of. From this sense we derive the verb *aḥassalyuḥissu* (verbal noun, *iḥsās*), the noun *ḥāssah* (sense, as in the sense of smell, hearing, etc., plural, *ḥawāss*), as well as *ḥāsūs*, which is synonymous with *jāsūs*, or spy. Thus, one might liken the five senses (*al-ḥawāss al-khams*) to the mind’s “spies” (*ḥawāsīs/jawāsīs*), in that they provide the mental faculties with the tangible input they need in order to understand, form judgments, and formulate intellectual and emotional responses to the world.

The root *ḥ-s-s* occurs six times in the Qur’an, and in the following senses: (1) Killing. In *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:152, God tells the Muslim

fighters that He kept His promise to them when, with His permission, they were about to destroy their enemies (*idh tahussūnahum bi idhnihi*). (2) Perception via the senses. *Sūrah Āl Imrān*, 3:52 speaks of how “Jesus became aware of” (*aḥassa ʿīsā*) his enemies’ unwillingness to believe in the truth (cf. *Sūrah Maryam*, 19:98). (3) Investigation, search for information. In *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:87, Jacob tells his sons to search out information about Joseph and their brother Benjamin, saying, “try to obtain some tidings of Joseph and his brother (*tahassasū min yūsuf wa akhīhi*).”

## 2) *The concept of shuʿūr*

The root *sh-ʿ-r* denotes several meanings. The first of these is a plant. There is a type of tree referred to as a *shaʿrah* (plural, *shaʿār*, which also refers to a forest). A derivative phrase is *dāhiyah shaʿrāʾ*, meaning “a great calamity.” A second denotation of this root is the act of feeling, sensing, or knowing. From this sense we derive the noun *shiʿār*, which refers to a byword or watchword by means of which fighters on one side in an armed conflict recognize each other. Related phrases and words include *shuʿūr*, meaning feeling or perception, *shiʿr*, poetry (plural, *ashʿār*), *layta shiʿri*, meaning, “If only I knew, perceived, or understood,” *shāʿir* (plural, *shuʿarāʾ*), meaning a poet, that is, someone who is seen as perceiving and understanding things that other people do not; and *shaʿīrah* (plural, *shaʿāʾir*), which is a site or landmark associated with one of the rites of the pilgrimage to Makkah, or one of the rites themselves.

Derivatives of this root occur in 45 places in the Qurʾan, and in the following senses: (1) Hair or fur (*ashʿār*). This sense of the word is used in *Sūrah al-Nahl*, 16:80. (2) A poet. *Sūrah al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 26:224; and *Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ*, 21:5. In both of these passages, poets are associated with lying, error and deceit. (3) Perception or realization. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:154 exhorts the Muslim community during a time of war, saying, “And say not of those who are slain in God’s cause, ‘They are dead’: nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not” (*lā tashʿurūn*). Similarly, God warns people in *Sūrah al-Zumar*, 39:55 that chastisement might come upon them unexpectedly: “without your being aware [of its approach]” (*wa antum lā tashʿurūn*). (4) Site of a religious

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rite. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:158 refers to the sites of the pilgrimage rites as *sha'ā'ir Allāh*, “the symbols set up by God.”

### 3) The concept of *ījās*

The root *w-j-s* denotes a fearful perception of something. The noun *wajs* refers to apprehension or dread, while the active participle, *wājis*, refers to a disquieting thought, premonition or foreboding. The phrase *tawajjasa al-ṭa'ām* means, “he nibbled on the food.”

The past tense verbal form *awjasa* occurs three times in the Qur'an in the sense of an unstated feeling of dread or fear. We read in *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:70, for example, that when certain angelic visitors came to see the prophet Abraham and he noticed that they had not partaken of the food he had served them, “he...became apprehensive of them” (*wa awjasa minhum khīfatan*). (See also *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:67 and *Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:28).

### 4) The concept of *īnās*

The root *a-n-s* denotes (1) the state of being familiar with, accustomed to, or at ease with; as such, it is contrasted with *wahshah*, meaning forlornness, loneliness or alienation, and (2) the act of seeing, hearing or otherwise perceiving something. Derivatives include the adjective *anīs*, meaning affable, friendly, or cordial; as a noun, *anīs* refers to a pleasant companion.

The past tense verb form *ānasa* occurs seven times in the Qur'an, four of which are in the context of Moses' seeing the burning bush as he traveled with his family through the desert. We read in *Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:29 that Moses “perceived a fire” (*ānasa... nāran*) on the slope of Mount Sinai. He then told his family to wait, saying, “Behold, I perceive a fire (*innī ānastu nāran*).” (See also *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:10 and *Sūrah al-Naml*, 27:7). It is from this root that we derive the word *insān*, meaning the pupil of the eye, which enables us to see things, and the collective noun *ins*, “human beings” who, unlike the jinn, are visible and tangible. The verbal noun *īnās* has thus been said to refer to clear, unambiguous sight, or the sight of something that brings reassurance or comfort. *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4:6 uses the verb *ānasa* in the sense of knowing, sensing or perceiving. After instructing believers to observe

the orphans under their care, it instructs them with the words: “if you find them to be mature of mind (*fa’in ānastum minhum rushdan*), hand over to them their possessions (*fadfa‘ū ilayhim amwālahum*)” rather than squandering them for selfish ends.

##### 5) *The concept of lams*

The root *l-m-s* denotes the act of touching or feeling with the hand, seeking, or perceiving. The verb *lamasa* or *lāmasa* is used metonymically to refer to sexual contact, while the sense of seeking or requesting is conveyed by the verbs *iltamasa* and *talammasa*.

Derivatives of the root *l-m-s* occur five times in the Qur’an, and in the following senses: (1) Seeking. The verb *lamasa* is used in this sense in the statement, “We reached out towards heaven” (*lamasnā al-samā’*) in *Sūrah al-Jinn*, 72:8. When, on the Day of Resurrection, the hypocrites seek light from the believers, they will be told, “Turn back, and seek a light [of your own] (*irji‘ū... faltamisū nūran!*)” (*Sūrah al-Ḥadīd*, 57:13). (2) To touch with one’s hands (*Sūrah al-An‘ām*, 6:7). (3) Sexual intercourse. The verb *lāmasa* is used in this sense in the phrase, “have cohabited with a woman” (*lāmastum al-nisā’*) found in *Sūrah al-Nisā’*, 4:43 (cf. *Sūrah al-Mā’idah*, 5:6).

##### 6) *The concept of yad*

Meaning “hand”, the word *yad* (plural, *aydin* or *ayādin*) is used metaphorically in numerous senses.

The word *yad* and its derivatives occur 121 times in the Qur’an in the following senses: (1) The actual hand (*Sūrah al-Mā’idah*, 5:11). (2) Legal claim. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:237 uses the word *yad* in this sense in the context of discussing the rights of the various parties affected by a pre-consummation divorce agreement, saying that “he in whose hand is the marriage-tie” (*alladhī bi yadihi ‘uqdat al-nikāḥ*), that is, the bride’s guardian, can decide to forgo the half of the bridal dower to which he would be entitled in the case of a divorce. (3) Power. *Sūrah Ṣād*, 38:45 refers to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as being “endowed with inner strength and vision” (*ulī al-aydī wa al-abṣār*). (4) Regret. In *Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, 7:149 we read about how the people of Moses “would smite their hands in remorse” (*suqūṭa fī aydīhim*) when they realized

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their error. (5) Generosity. Describing God's graciousness, *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:64 states "but wide are His hands stretched out (*yadāhu mabsūṭatān*): He dispenses [bounty] as He wills (*yunfiqu kayfa yashā'*)."

Hence, the word *yad* is used primarily to refer to the actual hand, although it is sometimes used figuratively to speak of grace, generosity, or power. The word *yad* has also been used metaphorically to refer to the entire person and his or her actions. *Sūrah al-Hajj*, 22:10 tells us, for example, that when unrepentant sinners are being chastised in the afterlife, they will be told, "This is an outcome of what your own hands have wrought (*dhālika bi mā qaddamat yadāka*) – for, never does God do the least wrong to His creatures!" In *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:79, those who have falsified scriptures are condemned "for what their hands have written" (*mimmā katabat aydihim*). The reference to their hands having done the writing is a way of emphasizing that they, and not God, were the authors of this speech. Similarly, *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:30 contains words of condemnation for those who teach misleading doctrines. Of them this verse states, "Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths" (*dhālika qawluhum bi afwāhihim*) as a means of stressing the fact that what they are saying is their own invention. The image of the hand, or *yad*, is likewise used in numerous places to symbolize power, might, authority, high rank, protection, aid, and benevolent action.

### 7) *The concept of mass*

The root *m-s-s* originally denotes the action of touching something with one's hand, while denoting, figuratively, touching or affecting something or someone in a non-physical manner. The trilateral verb form is *mass/yamussu* (verbal noun, *misās* or *masīs*). The passive participle *mamsūs* is thus used to mean mentally deranged or insane, as though the person concerned had been 'touched' by jinn, while the active participle, *māss*, is used to describe a pressing need (*hājatu māssah*). (Cf. the statement, *massat ilayhi al-ḥājah*, "There is a great need for it.")

Derivatives of this root occur approximately 61 times in the Qur'an, and in the following senses: (1) Sexual intercourse. *Sūrah al-*

*Aḥzāb*, 33:49 instructs men in how to comport themselves if they marry believing women “and then divorce them before you have touched them” (*min qabli an tamussūhunna*), and in *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:47, Mary the mother of Jesus asks, “How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me (*wa lam yamsasū bashar*)?” (2) To afflict, affect. In *Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, 7:95, we see people declaring, “Misfortune and hardship befell our forefathers as well” (*massa ābā’anā al-ḍarrā’u wa al-sarrā’*), while in *Sūrah Fāṭir*, 35:35, those blessed with Paradise describe it as a place “wherein no struggle can assail us (*lā yamussunā fihā naṣabun*), and wherein no weariness can touch us (*wa lā yamus-sunā fihā lughūb*).” (3) Confusion or mental disorder. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:275 compares those who indulge in usury to someone whose mind has been disordered by the ‘touch’ of Satan (*alladhī yatakhhabṭuhū al-shayṭānu min al-mass*). (4) Contact of one person’s skin with another’s. This sense is found in *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:97 in the phrase, *lā misāsa*, “Touch me not.”

#### 8) *The concept of sam<sup>c</sup>*

The root *s-m<sup>c</sup>* denotes the perception of something via the ear. The noun *sam<sup>c</sup>* thus refers to the ability to perceive sounds, and is used to refer figuratively to the ear, to the understanding, and to obedience to what one hears.

Derivatives of the root *s-m<sup>c</sup>* occur 185 times in the Qur’an, and in the following senses: (1) The capacity to perceive sounds. It is in this sense that it is used in *Sūrah al-Insān*, 76:2, where God describes Man as a being “endowed with hearing and sight” (*sami’an baṣīran*). Similarly, God speaks in *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf*, 46:26 of endowing people “with hearing, and sight, and hearts” (*ja‘alnā lahum samī’an wa abṣāran wa afīdah*). (2) Inward reception of the message one hears with the ear. *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:21 warns people not to be “like those who say, ‘We have heard’ (*sami’nā*), the while they do not hearken (*wa hum lā yasma‘ūn*).” This sense of the verb *sami‘a* is also found in *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf*, 46:26 quoted above, which goes on to speak of those who had been endowed with “hearing, and sight, and [knowledgeable] hearts,” saying, “but neither their hearing, nor their sight, nor their hearts were of the least avail to them, seeing that they went on rejecting

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God's messages." See *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:7, which speaks of God having "sealed" certain people's hearts and hearing such that, even if they hear with their ears, they will not respond with belief.

Negations of the act of *sam*<sup>c</sup> in the Qur'an refer not to the physical capacity to pick up sounds, but, rather, to a failure to respond to the sounds heard and to the message they convey. Those who do not respond to God or His prophets are described in the Qur'an as "dead." As we read in *Sūrah al-Rūm*, 30:52, the Prophet is told, "you cannot make the dead hear (*innaka lā tusmi'u al-mawtā*): nor can you make the deaf [of heart] hear this call (*wa lā tusmi'u al-ṣumma al-du'ā*)."

### 9) *The concept of inṣāt*

The root *n-ṣ-t* denotes silence, or the act of becoming silent in order to listen to something. The trilateral verb is *naṣatalyanṣitu*, while the quadrilateral verb is *anṣatalyunṣitu* (verbal noun, *inṣāt*).

This latter verb occurs in the Qur'an twice in the imperative voice. Its first occurrence is in *Sūrah al-A'raf*, 7:204, where believers are commanded, when the Qur'an is recited, to "hearken unto it" (*istami'ū lahu*) "and listen in silence" (*wa anṣitū*). As for the second, it is found in *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf*, 46:29, which talks about certain unseen beings who, when they heard the Qur'an, said to each other, "Listen in silence (*anṣitū*)!" The verb *anṣatalyunṣitu* thus refers to the act of becoming quiet for the purpose of focusing intently on what one is hearing. When one quiets heart and mind in order to listen attentively and reflect on what one is hearing, the Qur'an brings mercy to its listeners in the form of understanding, knowledge and renewed faith.

### 10) *The concept of ṣamam*

The root *ṣ-m-m* denotes the process of coming together, thereby closing up an opening or gap. From this we derive the noun *ṣamam*, meaning deafness, the implication that something has stopped up the passageways through which sound reaches the ear, and *ṣimām*, meaning a plug or a valve.

The root *ṣ-m-m* occurs fifteen times in the Qur'an, and in the following senses: (1) Deafness. The noun *ṣamam* is used in this sense in *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:24. (Cf. *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:25; *Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:46).

(2) Neglecting or refusing to listen to the truth. We are told in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:70-71 that because of their rebellion and rejection of God's messages, the children of Israel "became blind and deaf [of heart]" (*thumma 'amū wa šammū*). Deafness, or *šamam*, is thus used figuratively to describe the condition of people who refuse to listen to the truth and who, if they do hear it, refuse to accept it. Such individuals are described as "deaf, dumb and blind" (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:18 and 171; and *Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:97).

### 11) *The concept of udhun*

The letters *a-dh-n* constitute two roots that are close in meaning, though distinct in pronunciation. The first of these denotes the ear (*al-udhun*), while the other denotes knowledge (*idhn*). Their meanings are related in that it is through the ear (*udhun*) that we gain knowledge (*idhn*) via audible sounds. One might say, *adhintu bi hādha al-amr* ("I learned of this matter"), or that so-and-so *ādhananī*, meaning that he informed me. In this latter case, the quadriliteral verb is *ādhanalyu'dhinu* (verbal noun, *īdhān*). Also derived from this root is the quadriliteral form *adhghanalyu'adhdhinu* (verbal noun, *ta'dhīn*), meaning to announce that the time for one of the five canonical prayers (*salah*) has begun, and the noun *adhān*, which refers to the call to prayer.

Derivatives of this root occur 101 times in the Qur'an, eighteen of which are references to the physical ear. For example, *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:45 makes reference to the Torah's law of retribution: "an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear..." (*wa al-udhun bil-udhun*). Using the word *udhun* in a figurative sense, *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:61 refers to the way the Prophet's enemies would mock him, saying, "He is all ear (*huwa udhun*)," thereby insinuating that he would hear hallucinatory sounds and mistake them as revelations. To this the Qur'an replies, saying, "Say: '[Yes,] he is all ear, [listening] to what is good for you (*qul udhunu khayrin lakum*)!'" Similarly, *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:25 uses the plural *adhān* to refer not to people's physical ears, but to their willingness to listen to God's messages. Though they seem to listen to the Prophet, they are actually unresponsive, in their (spiritual) ears a kind of deafness (*fī ādhānihim waqran*). A third sense in which this root appears in the Qur'an is that of proclamation. In a

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description of a potential scene from the Day of Judgment, *Sūrah al-Aʿrāf*, 7:44 tells us that “a voice will loudly proclaim (*adhhdhana mu’adhhdhinun*)” that evildoers are only receiving their just due. A fourth sense borne by a derivative of this root is that of knowledge or command. *Sūrah Ghāfir*, 40:78 declares that no messenger could perform any miracle “other than by God’s leave (or command) (*illā bi idhn-illāh*).” The noun *adhān* is used in *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:3 in the sense of a proclamation, while *Sūrah Ibrāhīm*, 14:7 uses the derivative verb *ta’adhhdhana* in the sense of announcing or proclaiming.

### 12) *The concept of baṣar*

The letters *b-ṣ-r* make up two roots, one of which denotes knowledge or perception of something. From this sense we derive the adjective *baṣīr*, meaning knowledgeable (of, *bi*) or discriminating with regard to (*bi*), and the noun *baṣīrah*, meaning insight, mental vision, or discernment. Given its relation to the concept of clarity and sight, the word *baṣīrah* can also be used in the sense of evidence or proof. The trilateral verb is *baṣuralyabṣaru* (verbal noun, *baṣar*), while the quadrilateral verb is *abṣaralyubṣiru* (verbal noun, *ibṣār*), both meaning to see or understand, although the former takes the preposition *bi* (cf. *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:96), while the latter takes a direct object. The verbal noun *baṣar* (plural, *abṣār*; cf. *Sūrah al-Ḥashr*, 59:2) refers to eyesight, whereas *baṣīrah* is the vision of the mind or heart, or an integrated, complete knowledge of something. The verb *istabṣara* means to see, or to be endowed with reason, intelligence and insight, while the verb *tabaṣṣaralyatabaṣṣaru* (*tabaṣṣur*) means to reflect on or ponder.

As for the second root composed of the letters *b-ṣ-r*, it denotes the sewing together of two pieces of tanned leather or skin, while the noun *baṣrah* refers to loose stones.

Derivatives of the first root occur in 150 places in the Qur’an in the form of the verbal noun and all tenses of the verb, and in the following senses: (1) The vision of the heart. In *Sūrah Yūnus*, 10:43, God asks rhetorically, “Can you show the right way to the blind (*afa ’anta tahdī al-ʿumya*) even though they cannot see (*wa law kānū lā yubṣirūn*)?” (See also *Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:21). (2) Eyesight. This sense is found in God’s declaration that He has made Man “a being endowed with hearing and sight” (*Sūrah al-Insān*, 76:2; cf. *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, 20:125).

The adjective *baṣīr* is attributed to God in 42 verses of the Qur'an, in most of which it appears together with some other attribute or name. See, for example, *Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:1, which describes God as "All-Hearing, All-Seeing (*al-Samī' al-Baṣīr*)," *Sūrah Fāṭir*, 35:31, which describes Him as "Fully Aware, All-Seeing (*khabīr baṣīr*).” Note that in *Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:17, the quality of *baṣīrah* (insight) is linked to that of *khibrah* (awareness) in relation to people's inner states, while only that of *baṣīrah* is linked to their outward, visible actions. See *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:265, which declares, "God sees all that you do" (*wa Allāhu bi mā ta'malūna baṣīr*).

### 13) *The concept of ru'yah*

The letters *r-y* form a root that denotes looking and seeing with the physical eye or with the eye of the mind. The verbal noun *ra'yun* (plural, *ārā'*) refers to what a person sees with his or her mind; hence, an opinion, point of view, idea or belief. The reflexive verb form *tarā'ā* means to see each other, and the noun *ru'yah* refers to vision with either the eye or the heart. However, whereas the noun form *ru'yā* refers to the kind of vision one would have in one's sleep, the noun *ru'yah* refers to the seeing one does when awake. When the verb *ra'ā/yarā* is used in the sense of knowing, thinking or perceiving, it takes two direct objects. For example, the statement *ra'aytu zaydan khārijan* could mean either, "I thought Zayd had gone out," or, "I knew Zayd had gone out." When, by contrast, it is used in the sense of physical vision, it takes one direct object only.

Derivatives of this root occur 329 times in the Qur'an, and in the following senses: (1) Awareness. *Sūrah Saba'*, 34:6 states that those "who are endowed with [innate] knowledge are well aware that... (*yarā alladhīna ūtū al-ilmā*)." Similarly, *Sūrah al-An'am*, 6:75 speaks of God's giving Abraham insight into His dominion over the heavens and the earth (*nurī ibrahīma malakūta al-samāwāti wal-ard*). *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, 9:105 declares that "God will behold your deeds" (*sa yarā Allāhu a'malakum*), God's "seeing" clearly being a reference to His knowledge. And *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, 4:51 asks, "Are you not aware of those who... (*alam tara ilā alladhīna...*)?" (cf. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:258; *Sūrah Yāsīn*, 36:77) (2) Physical vision. *Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn*, 63:4 uses

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the word *ra'ā/yarā* in the sense of seeing with one's eyes, saying, "when you see them (*idhā ra'aytahum*), their outward appearance may please you" (*tu<sup>c</sup>jibuka ajsāmuhum*) (cf. *Sūrah al-Najm*, 53:11; cf. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:13). (3) Reflection or consideration. This sense of the verb *ra'ā* is found in *Sūrah al-Nahl*, 16:79, which asks, "Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never considered the birds, enabled [by God] to fly in mid-air (*alam yaraw ilā al-ṭayri musakhkharātin fī al-jaww*)?" (Cf. *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:27). (4) Seeing and hearing. *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:68 tells believers: "when you see (*idhā ra'ayta*)" those who disparage God's messages, turn away from them unless they begin speaking of something else.

### 14) *The concept of nazar*

The basic denotation of the trilateral root *n-z-r* is that of seeing, examining and reflecting on something. It can also refer to the act of waiting for or expecting something. The active participle *nāzīr* can refer to the eye, while the verbal noun *nazar* refers to the process of thinking about, measuring and assessing something. The phrase *nazara ilayhi* means "He looked at it," while the statement *nazara fī al-amr* means, "He considered or studied the matter."

Derivatives of this root occur 139 times in the Qur'an and in the following senses: (1) Mercy. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:88 tells us that those who knowingly reject the truth will not be granted mercy or respite (*wa lā hum yunzarūn*) in the life to come. (2) Expect or wait for. *Sūrah Yāsīn*, 36:49 tells us that for evildoers "nothing awaits them beyond (*mā yanzurūna illā*) a single blast [of God's punishment] (*ṣayḥatan wāḥidatan*)."

(See also *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:158). (3) Consideration or reflection. Referring to those who deny the resurrection, *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah*, 88:17 asks, "Do, then, they [who deny resurrection] never gaze at" (*afalā yanzurūna ilā*) the clouds pregnant with water, [and observe] how they are created?" (For a similar sense, see also *Sūrah al-Ankabūt*, 29:20; *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, 3:137; *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 6:11; and *Sūrah Yūnus*, 10:101). (4) Beholding. *Sūrah al-Qiyāmah*, 75:23 describes the faces of those in Paradise as "Looking towards their Lord (*ilā rabbihā nāzīrah*)."

The verbal noun *nazar* refers to the act of approaching something through vision, whether one's physical eye, or the eye of the mind ("look" – *Sūrah al-Muddathbir*, 74:21; "see" – *Sūrah al-Naml*, 27:27; "observe" – *Sūrah al-Ṭāriq*, 86:5 and *Sūrah Ghāfir*, 40:21; "consider" – *Sūrah ʿAbasa*, 80:24 and *Sūrah al-Aʿrāf*, 7:185). The quintiliteral form *intazaralyantaziru* (verbal noun, *intizār*) means to approach something with anticipation. You might look at (*tanzuru ilā al-shayʿ*) something, but not see it (*wa lā tarāhu*). On the other hand, you might look at it and examine it closely, both with your physical eye and the eye of your mind.

### 15) *The concept of mushāhadah*

The letters *sh-h-d* form a root that denotes presence, knowledge, and the conveyance of knowledge to others. The trilateral verb is *shahidal yashhadu* (verbal noun, *shahādah*), while the noun *mashhad* refers to a scene, a sight, or a place of assembly. The active participle *shāhid* (plural, *shuhūd*) is a witness, as well as a tombstone (which "witnesses" to the presence of someone buried in a particular spot). The verb *shahida* can mean to bear witness or provide testimony as evidence of who is in the right and who is in the wrong (cf. *Sūrah al-Nisāʿ*, 4:41), while the noun *shahādah* can refer to someone's testimony, that is, a definitive eye-witness report. The noun *shahīd* (plural, *shuhadāʿ*) refers to a martyr who dies in witness to a cause, and to whose faithfulness the angels bear witness. The word *shahīd* can also refer to someone whose testimony is reliable, and someone who has knowledge and awareness of everything around him or her.

Derivatives of this root occur in 160 verses of the Qurʿan, and in the following senses: (1) A witness. This sense is used in *Sūrah al-Nisāʿ*, 4:41 and 4:72; *Sūrah al-Burūj*, 85:7, and *Sūrah al-Nisāʿ*, 4:69. (2) Guardian angel. *Sūrah Qāf*, 50:21 tells us that on the Day of Resurrection, every soul will come forward with "an [angel] to drive (*sāʿiq*) and an [angel] to bear witness (*wa shahīd*)."  
(3) The Muslim community. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:143 refers to the Muslim community as "witnesses" to other people (*shuhadāʿ ʿalā al-nās*). (4) Call upon someone as a witness. This sense is found in *Sūrah al-Ṭalāq*, 65:2 and *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:23.

## Qur'anic Terminology

### 16) The concept of *amā*

The letters *am-y* form a root that denotes concealment and covering. The trilateral verb is *amiya/ya'amā*, meaning to be or become blind, and the verbal noun is *amā*, meaning blindness. From this is derived the male singular adjective *a'mā*, meaning blind or sightless (feminine singular, *amyā*, and plural masculine, *amūn*, *umy*, or *umyān*). However, when people use the phrase *mā a'māhu*, meaning, "How blind he is!", they are not speaking of physical blindness.

Derivatives of the root *am-y* occur 33 times in the Qur'an, and in the two following senses: (1) Blindness of the heart. As we read in *Sūrah al-Hajj*, 22:46, "verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind – but blind have become the hearts that are in their breasts (*wa lākin ta'mā al-qulūbu allatī fī al-ṣudūr!*)" Similarly, *Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:72 warns that whoever was spiritually blind in this life "*(man kāna fī hādhihi a'mā)* will be blind in the life to come (*fa huwa fī al-ākhirati a'mā*)." (Cf. *Sūrah Fāṭir*, 35:19). (2) Blindness of the eyes. Physical blindness is referred to in *Sūrah al-A'mā*, 80:2 and *Sūrah al-Nūr*, 24:61.

### 17) The concept of *ayn*

The root consisting of the letters *ay-n* has several denotations. One is the physical eye (*ayn*, plural, *ayun*, *uyūn*, *ayān*), the member of the body that enables us to see. The word *ayn* can also refer to a spy, or to a spring of water. From this root we derive the quadrilateral verb *āyanal yu'āyinu* (verbal noun, *mu'āyanah* or *iyān*), meaning to see or inspect. Hence, if one were to say, *laqītuhu iyānan*, it would mean, "I met him in person, face to face." As for the noun *im*, it refers to a wild cow, the wild bull being referred to as *ayan*.

Derivatives of this root occur 65 times in the Qur'an, and in the following three senses: (1) The eye. *Sūrah Āl Imrān*, 3:13, *Sūrah Yūsuf*, 12:84, and *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 5:45 use the term *ayn* to refer to the physical eye. (2) A spring of water. This sense of the word *ayn* is found in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:60. (3) As a metaphor for care and protection. In *Sūrah Tāhā*, 20:39, God tells Moses of His intention that Moses be "formed under My eye," that is, under His divine protection and guidance.