

Qur'ānic Reflections

SESSION 8

تَسْبِيح
the tasbeeh project

Reminder:
Reflecting on
the Holy Qur'ān

“

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ...

Those to whom We have given the Book
read it as it ought to be read... ”

SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH (2:121)



Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (as): “They recite its verses **slowly**, and **understand** it, and **act** according to its orders, and **hope** for its promises, and are **afraid** of its threats, and take **lessons** from its stories, and **obey** its commandments, and **desist** from what it prohibits.”



**A truly immersive,
transformational
experience!**

Tafsīr and Tadabbur

Tafsīr: reveal the meaning of a verse. The task of the Holy Prophet (saw), his righteous successors and specialist scholars.

Tadabbur: reflection and pondering on the message of a verse, internalising the implicit meaning of the verse, taking admonition and making changes. An order for all - Surah Muhammad (47:24):

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

Do they not contemplate the Qur'ān, or are there locks on the hearts?

Session 8:

Surāh Tā Hā'

(20:25)

“

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي

He said, “My Lord! Open my breast for me.” ”

SŪRAH TĀ HĀ (20:25)

Famous du'ā of Prophet Mūsa (as) after Allah (swt)'s command to him to go admonish Fir'aun.

The first of a series of requests from Prophet Mūsa (as), to help him succeed in his mission.

All of the requests were granted (v.36), and Allah (swt) assured He would be with them (v. 46).

Context: 20:25-35

Verse 25: Opening of the breast (spiritual expansion)

Verse 26: Easing of the task ahead

Verses 27-28: Clarity of speech for understanding

Verses 29-30: Appointment of Hārūn as minister

Verses 31-32: Reinforcement of strength / share task

Verses 33-35: so we may glorify You greatly, and remember You greatly. Indeed You see us best.

Meaning of صَدْر

Sadr literally denotes the chest cavity in which the heart is contained. However in terms of the spiritual heart, *sadr* is a metaphor, just like *qalb*, referring to the non-material aspect of a human being.

For example, Sūrah al-Hajj (22:46):

... فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

*... Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind,
but the hearts turn blind – those which are in the breasts!*

Spiritual Aspect of Humans

The Qur'ān uses five terms for the non-material / spiritual aspect of the human being. While appearing synonymous, they have different meanings depending of the context.

رُوح

نَفْسُ

قَلْبُ

فُؤَادُ

صَدْرُ

The spirit that was breathed by God into man, transformation from mere animal to sublime creature. The origin of human life, gives man the ability to perceive realities and move through free volition.

The self or psyche of the human. Its various states have been mentioned in the Qur'ān from inciting to pleasing – shows state of the person's obedience or disobedience to God at any given time.

The spiritual heart which changes from one state to another - constant state of flux. The spiritual intelligence through which humans deliberate on and carry out the activities of their lives.

The faculty by which human beings perceive realities and make informed decisions and choices that reflect their true inner state. Similar to *qalb* except *qalb* also refers to physical heart.

In a spiritual sense, *sadr* has a more expansive meaning than *qalb*, referring to potentials and capacities that are latent in a human being, which can be expanded or even contracted.



* When used for the heart, as in *sharh al-sadr*, it means relieving the constriction in the chest and filling it with Divine enlightenment and remembrance: see al-Zumar (39:22):

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ... "Is someone whose breast Allah has opened to Islam so that he follows a light from His Lord?..."

Inshirāh al-sadr

- *Inshirāh al-sadr* is a Qur'anic metaphor for expanding the spiritual capacity of an individual.
- It grants the correct understanding of truth and an increase in the ability to bear hardships. This in turn gives rise to a determined resolve and complete trust and reliance on God. Such a person would not waver in his covenant with God.
- For Prophets, this *inshirāh* also gives them the extra capacity to receive revelation and carry out the mission to propagate the message of God.
- In the famous du'ā of Prophet Mūsa (as), he asks for *inshirāh al-sadr*. In Sūrah al-Sharh (94:1), Prophet Muhammad (saw) was granted this favour without even asking for it:

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ

Did We not open your breast for you?

Inshirāh al-sadr

- *Inshirāh al-sadr* is not a bounty exclusive to the Prophets – it is available for anyone who allows Islam into their heart. See Sūrah al-An'ām (6:125):

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يُشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ...

Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam...

- The Holy Prophet (saw) was asked what was the sign that an individual had been granted *inshirāh al-sadr* and he replied:

Detachment



from the world of false allure (*dār al-ghurūr*),

Attentiveness



towards the abode of permanence (*dār al-khulūd*), and

Preparedness



for death before it comes.

Reflections

- ▶ One with *inshirāh al-sadr* has a complete trust and reliance on Allah (swt). What is the real level of my trust and reliance on Allah (swt)? Do I seek His assistance with true belief in His lordship and power, just like Prophet Mūsa (as) wholeheartedly seeking His assistance with the most difficult of tasks – or do I just worry over things instead?
- ▶ *Inshirāh al-sadr* is granted to those who truly allow Islam into their heart, allowing their latent potentials and capacities to expand. How sincere is my servitude towards Allah (swt)? Am I truly submissive to Allah (swt)'s will or do I allow myself to follow own desires and temptations, constantly wavering in my faith and not achieving my potential?
- ▶ Thinking about the hadith of the Holy Prophet (saw) on *inshirāh al-sadr*, and reviewing my usual thoughts, words and actions - do I spend my time focused on this temporary world (*dār al-ghurūr*) or the permanent hereafter (*dār al-khulūd*)? What are some practical steps I can take to make sure I focus more on my hereafter and 'prepare for death before it comes'.

Making a Change

- ▶ Tadabbur means reflection and pondering on the message of a verse, internalising the implicit meaning of the verse, taking admonition and making changes.
- ▶ **What changes will I make in my life as a result of our reflections on these verses?**

How will I change myself to submit more fully to God so as to receive the blessing of *inshirāh al-sadr* ?