

Guiding Light Selections from the Holy Qur'an

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Translation

In the Name of Allah
The Most Beneficent, ever Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

25. Of them there are some
Who (pretend to) listen to thee;
But We have thrown
Veils on their hearts,
So they understand it not,
And deafness in their ears;
If they saw every one
Of the Signs, not they
Will believe them;
In so much that
When they come to thee,
They (but) dispute with thee;
The Unbelievers say:
"These are nothing
But tales of the ancients."
Sūrah al Anām (6)

﴿٢٥﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ
وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً
أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا
وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمَةَ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوهَا
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ
سورة الأنعام (٦): ٢٥

13. When Our Signs are rehearsed
To him, he says
"Tales of the Ancients!"

﴿١٣﴾ إِذْ أَنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتِنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

14. By no means!
But on their hearts
Is the stain of the (ill)
Which they do!
Sūrah al Muṭaffifīn (83)

﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

سورة المطففين (٨٣): ١٣-١٤

In the above verses and in many others, we find an important Qur'anic concept, *al Awwalūn*. This term is used to indicate "ancient times," "ancient peoples and civilizations," "forefathers," and "heritage."

The Qur'anic use of this term indicates its importance as a concept, and the different negative and positive aspects of the term. It also reveals the important psychological aspect of the term.

In these Verses the Qur'an shows the use of the term to mean moot, outdated, or reactionary. It shows how the adversaries of Islam and Truth use the term to ridicule the call for Islam and the Straight Path. The Qur'an shows how the term is considered so powerful that the enemies of Truth use it alone, singularly in arguments, without support of proofs or evidence. The term clearly evokes a powerful psychological sentiment of reaction in human beings.

24. The chiefs of the Unbelievers
Among his people said:
"He is no more than a man
Like yourselves: his wish is
To assert his superiority
Over you: if God had wished
(To send messengers),
He could have sent down
Angels: never did we hear
Such a thing (as he says),
Among our ancestors of old."
Sūrah al Mu'minūn (23)

﴿٢٤﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُو الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ
يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْفَضَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً
مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ
سورة المؤمنون (٢٣): ٢٤

168. "If only we had had
Before us a Message
From those of old,

﴿١٦٨﴾ لَوَ أَن عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِنْ الْأَوَّلِينَ

169. "We should certainly have
Been Servants of God,
Sincere (and devoted)!"
Sūrah al Šaffat (37)

﴿١٦٩﴾ لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ
سورة الصافات (٣٧): ١٦٨-١٦٩

The above verses show the use of the term *al Awwalūn* in the opposite, but comparably powerful psychological sentiment and effect. The enemies of Islam and Truth evoke the term to deny the legitimacy of the Truth of Islam because they claim it has no roots in the past and in their heritage, and was not known nor told to them by their forefathers. Here again one can see and feel the power of the term and its role in evoking human sentiment.

68. Do they not ponder over
The Word (of Allah), or
Has anything (new) come
To them that did not
Come to their fathers of old?
Sūrah al Mu'minūn (23)

﴿٦٨﴾ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ
أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّاتٍ آبَاءَهُمْ الْأَوَّلِينَ
سورة المؤمنون (٢٣): ٦٨

In the above verse, we find that the Qur'an evokes the powerful effect of the term *al Awwalūn* and seeks legitimacy, by its use, to challenge the minds and hearts of the adversaries.

43. On account of their arrogance

In the land and their
Plotting of Evil.
But the plotting of Evil
Will hem in only
The authors thereof. Now
Are they but looking for
The way the ancients
Were dealt with? But
No change wilt thou find
In Allah's way (of dealing):
No turning off wilt thou
Find in Allah's way (of dealing).
Sūrah Fāṭir (35)

﴿٤٣﴾ أَسْتَكْبَارًا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ
وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ
فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ
فَلَنْ نَجْدِلُكَ اللَّهُ تَبْدِيلًا
وَلَنْ نَجْدِلُكَ اللَّهُ تَحْوِيلًا
سورة فاطر (٣٥): ٤٣

In the verse above, we find that the Qur'an indicates another important dimension of the term. It points to the dimension of laws of history and the laws of nature.

133. Were ye witnesses

When Death appeared before
Ya'qūb (Jacob)?
Behold, he said to his sons:
"What will ye worship after me?"
They said: "We shall worship
Thy God and the God of thy
fathers"
Of Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Ismā'il
(Ishmael)
and Ishāq (Isaac),
The One (True) God:
To Him we bow (in Islam)."
Sūrah al Baqarah (2)

﴿١٣٣﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ
إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ
مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ
آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ
سورة البقرة (٢): ١٣٣

104. When it is said to them:

"Come to what Allah
Hath revealed; come
To the Apostle:"
They say: "Enough for us
Are the ways we found
Our fathers following."
What! even though their fathers
Were void of knowledge
And guidance?
Sūrah al Mā'idah (5)

﴿١٠٤﴾ وَإِذْ أُقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا
إِلَى مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ
قَالُوا أَحْسَبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا
أَوْ لَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ لَيَعْلَمُونَ
شَيْعًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ
سورة المائدة (٥): ١٠٤

5. No knowledge have they

Of such a thing, nor
Had their fathers. It is
A grievous thing that issues

﴿٥﴾ مَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ
كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً

From their mouths as a saying.
 What they say is nothing
 But falsehood!
Sūrah al Kahf (18)

تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ
 إِنْ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا
 سورة الكهف (١٨): ٥

6. See they not how many
 Of those before them
 We did destroy? –
 Generations We had established
 On the earth, in strength
 Such as We have not given
 To you—for whom
 We poured out rain
 From the skies in abundance,
 And gave (fertile) streams
 Flowing beneath their (feet):
 Yet for their sins
 We destroyed them,
 And raised in their wake
 Fresh generations
 (To succeed them).
Sūrah al Anām (6)

۞ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
 مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 مَالًا لَمْ يُمَكِّنْ لَكُمْ
 وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا
 وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ
 فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ
 قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ
 سورة الأنعام (٦): ٦

In the above verses and many others, we find other terms of similar meaning and dimensions. These terms are 'ābā' and *Qurūn*, literally meaning, "forefathers," and "ancient peoples."

In all these cases, the Qur'ān shows us the importance of such terms and the positive and negative ways they are used. The Qur'ān shows their different dimensions and their strong psychological effect.

Reflection upon these verses and the relevant terms should engage the mind of the Muslim social scientists and suggest opportunities and direction for significant research of the dimensions of history, psychology, identity, imitation and education, reflected in the Qur'ānic usage of these terms.

The Muslim social scientists should not read these verses passively, nor merely for personal spiritual benefit; they should be read and studied also for guidance, direction and the acquisition of valid information and a better understanding of human nature and the social and natural realities of *this world* and the Hereafter. They will undoubtedly be better equipped, therefore, to carry out their research and other works with the help of the *hidayah* (guidance) of the *Wahy* (Divine Knowledge) of Allah (SWT).