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*The Position of Woman
in the Creation:
A Qur'anic Perspective*

Introduction

This article attempts to examine the creation of the first woman, Eve, according to Islamic teachings, with respect to the first verse of Sūra Four (*Nisā'*/Women) in the Qur'an. The emphasis will be on the interpretation of the verse, particularly in the exegetical works from past to present. However, before embarking on the examination of the verse, it is important to underline, for the sake of clarity, that it is a concise verse. It is inferred, thus, that although Allah does not seek to recount the matters of creation with this verse and others, He still alludes to these issues, which are also the subject of scientific thought. As a result, since the topic of this verse has been explored deeply through sciences like biology, physics and astronomy, it is not possible to elucidate this problem through an exploration of only religion and proof texts (*naŝŝ*). These caveats should be borne in mind to emphasize that although this article does not aim to finally resolve the biological aspect of creation, its purpose is to contribute to the theological and religious aspect of the question through exegetical interpretations.

Relevant Verses:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا
بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا وَتَسَاءَلُونَ

“O mankind! be conscious of your Sustainer, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and remain conscious of God” (al-Nisā’ 4/1).

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

“He it is Who created you from a single being, and of the same (kind) did He make his mate, that he might find comfort in her” (al-A’raf 7/189).

خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا

“He created you from a single being, then made its mate of the same (kind)” (al-Zumar 39/6).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ

“And He it is Who has brought you into being from a single being” (al-An ‘ām 6/98).

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً

“And Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves, and has given you sons and grandchildren from your wives” (al-Nahl 16/72).

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

“And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion” (al-Rūm 30/21).

فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْإِنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَرْوَوْا فِيهَا

“The Originator of the heavens and the earth; He made mates for you from among yourselves, and mates of the cattle too, multiplying you thereby” (al-Shūrā 42/11).

Common Origin of Male and Female Human Beings and Qur'anic Terminology

Each of the verses cited above refers to the common origins of the creation of human beings and emphasizes that the human species is designed in pairs. Therefore, it is necessary to look up the meanings of the terms *nafs* and *zawj* to understand the way in which humans were created. For this reason, the purpose of the terms *nafs* and *zawj*, and correspondingly of phrases “*nafs wāhida*” and “*khalāqa minhā zawjahā*”, will be interpreted and understood through careful exploration.

Beginning with the concept of *nafs*, although the word in question is semantically feminine, it encompasses both masculinity and femininity in its usage. In its lexical meaning it denotes the “same of something” and the “thing itself”, and in religious terminology it denotes soul, spirit and essence.¹ Foundationally, *nafs* is the entity that makes a human being what it is and, indeed, a human being in the worldly realm is comprised of all its soul and body.² This meaning of *nafs*, which is used only for human beings, points to the common origins of human beings and constitutes the very essence of humanity.

The concept of *zawj* is used for both female and male genders, but contrary to *nafs* it is a semantically masculine concept. This concept, with its meaning of coupling and matching, is used for each of the two elements of a couple or pair. However, since being in a couple or pair does not necessitate resemblance or sameness, opposing things can also be in couples or pairs. Namely, the concept of *zawj* denotes a couple or pair but does not necessarily mean being similar or the same. Unlike *nafs*, the concept of *zawj* is used for couples of animals, plants and every other being along with human beings. In the verse “and of everything We have created pairs” (Dhāriyāt 51/49), the reader is told that there are similar, antithetical or hard-to-separate composites of entities in the universe.³ Indeed, with the implications of these

1 Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur'ān*. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjilī al-Miṣriyya, 1970), “*naḥs*.”

2 Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Miṣbāḥ* An Exegesis of the Qur'an IV (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-'Ālam li-l-Maṭbū'āt, 1974), 135. According to 'Abduh, the concept of *naḥs* is the reality or quality through which one becomes human and is separated from other beings in the universe. Therefore, the human being is created out of one generum and reality (Rashid Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* IV (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), 326–327). Muhammad Asad, too, states that *naḥs* means soul, spirit, intellect, living being, animate being, human being, person, identity (personal identity), humanity, essence of life and the first principle.

concepts, the dominant themes of the dual creation of human beings coming from a common origin and the inevitable function of piety for human beings stand out.

The Treatment of the Verse in Exegesis

Using conceptual analysis and the interpretations of exegetes, we can observe that many exegetical masters understood and explicated the phrase of “*nafs wāhida*” as referring to Adam. It is possible to count al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922),⁴ al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944),⁵ al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143),⁶ al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153),⁷ al-Qurtūbī (d. 671/1272),⁸ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372),⁹ Abū al-Su‘ūd (d. 982/1574),¹⁰ al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834),¹¹ Bursawī (d. 1137/1725), Mawdūdī (d. 1399/1979) and Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1401/1981) among these exegetes. In fact, Ibn ‘Arabī, who, in the beginning of the chapter, Baqara (The Cow), moved from the objection to the creation of Adam, argues that there were blood-shedding and fomenting beings like humans on the earth before Adam. Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers interpreted “*nafs wāhida*” in this verse as referring to Adam.¹² ‘Abduh (d. 1323/1905) and al-Marāghī (d. 1364/1945), on the other hand, argue that the interpretation of the term in question as Adam is derived not from the verse itself, but from the assumption that the ancestor of all human beings *should* be Adam. Indeed, regarding the text on face value, ‘Abduh opines that the meaning of *nafs wāhida* should not be Adam. As a matter of fact, some exegetes say that the interlocutor of the address, “O humankind” at the

3 Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, “zawj”; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 1885–1886, “zawj”.

4 al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān* VI, ed. ‘Abdullāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hijri, 2001), 339–340.

5 al-Māturīdī, *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān* III, eds. Mehmet Boynukahn and, Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: Dār al-Mizān, 2005), 8. However, Māturīdī, contrary to other exegetes, does not elaborate on the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. Instead, he states that the essence and the origin of all human beings is *nafs wāhida*, or Adam, without saying that it is necessarily the body or the soul of Adam. He, being aware of the contradiction, tries to reconcile the creation of human beings both from Adam and soil or semen.

6 al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* III, ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd (Riyāḍ: Maktaba al-‘Ubaykan, 1998), 5.

7 al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān* IV. (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayā, 1961), 8–9. al-Ṭabarsī expresses that Allah emphasizes and commands piety in this chapter, and that *nafs wāhida* is interpreted by many exegetes as Adam. The rest of the verse is understood as referring to Eve. It is emphasized that in this interpretation, the hadith mentioning the creation of Eve out of Adam’s rib is central. However, al-Ṭabarsī also recounts a report by Muḥammad Bāqir about the creation of Eve out of the clay that was left off from the creation of Adam.

8 al-Qurtūbī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān* VI (Beirut: Mu‘assasa al-Risāla, 2006), 6.

9 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* III (Cairo: Mu‘assasa Qurṭuba, 2000), 333.

10 Abū al-Su‘ūd, *Irshād al-‘Aql* I, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā (Riyāḍ: Maṭba‘ al-Sādah, n. d.), 638.

11 al-Shawkānī, *Fath al-Qadar* I, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Umayrā (Mansūra: Dār al-Wafā’, 1994), 674.

beginning of the verse is either the people of Mecca or the Quraysh. Then the meaning of *naḥs wāḥida* should be the Quraysh or Banū 'Adnān. If the addressees are Arabs, it can be inferred that the *naḥs wāḥida* is Ya'rub or Qaḥṭān. 'Abduh thinks that this address comprises all communities that are summoned by the message of Islam. Such interpretations demonstrate that prevalent cultural assumptions affect one's understanding of the verse, and that readers made sense of the address, "O humankind" depending on their particular beliefs. Once people believe that they are the progeny of Adam, they tend to interpret *naḥs wāḥida* as Adam; in contrast, when communities believe their purported ancestors are otherwise, the meaning is interpreted accordingly.¹³ These assessments and explications demonstrate that the source of the interpretation as Adam is not the dogma itself, but a presumption of people. Indeed, 'Abduh suspects these beliefs. While the Qur'an does not explicitly deny the idea of Adam being the father of all human beings, 'Abduh does not oppose it. However, it takes a tinge of forced interpretation to prove this idea.

Additionally, not all of the aforementioned exegetes offer the same interpretation. Although they all agree on the fact that the *naḥs wāḥida* is Adam, they interpret the phrase "*khalāqa minhā zawjahā*" differently. Māturidī, for example, having said that *naḥs wāḥida* is Adam, advances to the "how-ness" of our origins in Adam without mentioning the creation of the first man and his wife. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), on the other hand, reports that the opinion of Abū Muslim Iṣfahānī (d. 322/934) on the issue differs somewhat from other scholars. According to Abū Muslim Iṣfahānī, Allah created Adam as one soul, while

12 This line of thought is advanced by Ibn 'Arabī. Within his pantheistic system, Adam was the first creation because Allah created Adam in his image. Allah manifests Himself in only one image and a second manifestation is not possible. For this reason, He created Eve in the image of Adam like a human being. As a result, a man loves a woman by virtue of being her origin. Woman, on the other hand, loves a man like the dependence of a part on the whole and takes interest in him by virtue of her dependence on her origin. That is because man is considered to be the homeland of woman. Accordingly, A. Avni Konuk interprets man as a complete and wise being who gets the better of his carnal desires, whereas woman is an incomplete and ignorant being who succumbs to her carnal desire and is preoccupied with arrogance. These meanings apply to men and women in their appearance. Thus, complete and wise women, although female in appearance, are like men in actuality and Rabī'a al-Adawīyya constitutes the best example of such women. Similarly, incomplete and ignorant men-in-appearance are considered women in actuality. The ignorance and stupidity of the Pharaoh and Nimrod could be given as examples of this. Ahmed Avni Konuk, *Mesnevi-i Şerif Şerhi* 1, ed. Selçuk Eraydın-Mustafa Tahrahi (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), 75.

13 Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* IV, 323–325. It is not possible to say that the exegetes are in agreement about the addressee of the verse. For further comments and evaluations on the issue see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* IX (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 167; Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* IV, 323–325; al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* II (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1946), 175; Cemal Aḡırman, *Kādīmın Yarattığı* (Istanbul: Rağbet, 2001), 204–205.

he created Eve on the model of Adam. As a matter of fact, the word “*min*” in the phrase “*khalāqa minhā zawjahā*” points to the beginning moment of an event. Since creation and bringing into existence *ex nihilo* began with Adam, the verse can be construed as “he created you out of one and the same essence”. Furthermore, as Allah is capable of creating Adam out of soil, He should also be capable of creating Eve from the same matter. The text does not necessarily imply that Eve was made any differently than Adam. Therefore, it is disingenuous to argue that Eve is created out of one of Adam’s rib bones.¹⁴ Kaffāl (d. 365/975), also, subscribes to this opinion, and interprets the creation “out of one *nafs*” as “He created each of you out of one *nafs* and He created your wife out of the same category of *nafs* as human and subject to equal humanness”.¹⁵ Exegetes such as al-Shawkānī,¹⁶ al-Qāsimī (d. 1914),¹⁷ al-Marāghī,¹⁸ Muhammad Asad (d. 1992)¹⁹ and Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1981) are among those who acknowledge or agree with both Kaffāl and Iṣfahānī’s opinion.

14 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* IX, 167. Iṣfahānī interprets the pronoun of *minhā* as “He created his wife from his kind” by connecting it to *nafs wāhida*. The word *nafs* in this verse has the same usage with the concept of *nafs* in the verses of Āl ‘Imrān 3:164, al-Tawba 9:128 and al-Nahl 16:72. Indeed, this matter in the last of these verses is translated by scholars in Turkish commentaries as “Allah size kendilerinizden zevceler de verdi” (Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır d. 1942), “Allah sizin için kendilerinizden giftler yarattı” (Hasan Basri Çantay d. 1964), “Allah size kendi nefislerinizden eşler yarattı” (Süleyman Ateş, Ahmet Tekin), “Allah size kendi benliklerinizden eşler nasip etti” (Yaşar Nuri Öztürk). In English commentaries it is translated in various ways also: “Allah hath given you wives of your own kind” (Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall d. 1936), “Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves” (Mawlānā Muḥammad ‘Alī d. 1951), “God has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature” (‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Alī d. 1952), “Allah has made for you *azwāj* (mates or wives) of your own kind (Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī & Muḥammad Muhsin Khan), “God has given you mates of your own kinds” (Muhammad Asad d. 1992). Namely, rendering of *nafs* “of your own kind” in translations shows that it is understood in parallel with the chapter of Woman. If this verse were to be rendered in tandem with the traditional interpretation, it should have been translated as “Allah created wives of your own kind, namely, of your rib bones”

15 al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* II, 175.

16 al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadār* I. Ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayrā (Manşūra: Dār al-Wafā, 1994), 674. He too thinks that the wife Eve is created from the *nafs wāhida* and claims that the first creation in question happened only once. Actually, he translates the said verse as “O human beings, Allah created you from the *nafs wāhida* from which he had created the wife of Adam as well.”

17 al-Qāsimī, *Maḥāsin al-Ta’wīl* V (Dār al-Iḥyā al-Ṭurāth al-‘Arabī, 1957), 1094–1095. He, though admitting that *nafs wāhida* is Adam, argues that God created his wife from the same self or kind by connecting the pronoun at the end of the verse, “He created his wife from him” to the *nafs*.

18 al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* II, 175. He is also among the scholars who think that Eve is not created from Adam. According to him, even though scholars interpreted *nafs wāhida* as Adam, they did it not because the verse says so but because they believe that Adam is the father of humankind.

19 Muhammad Asad, *The Message of Qur’an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 155. After having stated that many of the classical exegetes preferred “human being” from among many meanings of the concept of *nafs*, says that he concurs with ‘Abduh. Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* IV, 323. For him, once all connotations of the term *nafs* are taken into account, *nafs wāhida* refers not to Adam but to the common origin of the human race and to their brotherhood. The concept itself denotes humanity. The creation of his wife from him reflects the biological fact that both genders were derived from one living entity.

Among those who are critical of the interpretation of past scholars are Mawdūdī,²⁰ Mūsā Jār Allāh, Ṭabāṭabā'ī²¹, Amina Wadud,²² Süleyman Ateş,²³ and Bayraktar Bayraklı.²⁴ Though it is not possible to treat their criticisms individually in this article, a few will be addressed. Mūsā Jār Allāh, for example, citing that “Eve was extracted from the left rib of Adam” is taught as an article of faith or a historical fact in catechisms and history books, expresses his astonishment at the agreement on an interpretation that contradicts the custom of the Qur'an. Indeed, Jār Allāh questions the grave significance of interpreting a verse with a phrase that is explicitly incorrect on the part of scholars. For him, interpreting verses with ungrounded ideas constitutes a crime as severe as repealing the Qur'an. These interpretations reveal that the word *minhā* in the phrase “*khalāqa minhā zawjahā*” was

20 Having admitted that there is no way to know how Eve was created, he mentions that the idea that Eve was created out of the thirteenth rib of Adam is adopted in the Bible and Talmud. On the contrary, he continues, the Qur'an is silent on this issue and the hadith of the Prophet in al-Bukhārī and Muslim indicates another meaning than is generally understood. Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* I (Istanbul: İnsan, 1963), 327.

21 Ṭabāṭabā'ī interprets the phrase “*khalāqa minhā zawjahā*” as an understanding that his wife is similar to him and created from his kind. For him, all beings dispersed on earth are derived from two individuals who are similar to each other. The expression of *min* in the verse implies the source from which something originates and emerges. Thus, he thinks that the interpretation of *naḥs* as an understanding that his wife is created from him or a part of him is not correct, and that the verse is not a proof for this line of thought. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān: An Exegesis of the Qur'ān* IV (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-'ālam li-l-maṭbū'at 1974), 136.

22 She emphasizes the position of man and woman within the creation rather than the characteristics of creation and devises an approach for the problem as follows: this verse reveals the fact that humans are created as parts of a pair. The Qur'an indicates that along with the living beings there are many other non-qualified entities that are created in pairs (al-Dhāriyāt 51:49; Yāsīn 36:36). This means that being in pairs is the necessary characteristic of createdness. A couple consists of two forms of a single reality that go together. These parts, even if their nature, qualities, and functions are different, complete each other in a way that comprises a whole. Each member of the couple assumes the presence of the other from very early on and their existence is constructed on a mutual relationship. A man becomes a husband only when he has a wife and a woman becomes a wife only when she has a husband. In the witnessed world the existence of a spouse is contingent upon the existence of the other one. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21; Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 85.

23 He explains the *naḥs wāhida* as a single living being and attempts to ground the issue on two kinds of reproduction identified as gamic and agamic in biology. In agamic reproduction the offspring is produced by the splitting of a single living being. This kind of production is found in seas, waterfronts, and algae. Also, bacteria and flagellant protozoan animals reproduce in this way. Gamic reproduction, on the other hand, is more adaptable for the life on land. Thus, life on earth might have started with basic forms through agamic reproduction in the water, followed by gamic reproduction that was passed onto land. In the meantime, Allah may have created various cells to form every kind of living thing. Every living being that exists on earth acquired their current form by evolving from these cells, building from their stem cells. First man, too, might have been created out of a simple, self-reproducing cell like this. Although this process of development is reminiscent of evolution, it occurs within the human species, and thus such creation is different from evolution. This living thing, which is the origin of the human being, acquired its intellect and capabilities during its development and brought about the humankind by assuming the name of Adam. As a result, the first creation might have occurred by agamic reproduction from a cell or a stem. Indeed, the creation of Eve from Adam in the hadith, if it is authentic, proves its occurrence through agamic reproduction. Süleyman Ateş, *Yüce Kur'an'ın Çağdaş Tefsiri* II (Istanbul: Yeni Ufuklar Neşriyat, 1989), 188–194.

understood to refer to one part of Adam. But if *minhā* means “from his rib”, how could we make sense of verses like “He created mates for you from yourselves” (30/21) and “Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness” (30/54)? This problem clearly illustrates the lack of care exegetes may use while interpreting the Qur’an. By taking some of the words at face value, the exegetes compromised their interpretations of the Qur’anic verses. Although there is no doubt in the soundness of the hadith in the compilations of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, they do not constitute decisive proof for the interpretation of the verse in the Qur’an. In terms of its wording and meaning the verse does not seem to be suitable for an interpretation with hadith.²⁵ Ṭabāṭabā’ī informs us that when Muḥammad Bāqir, one of the Shi’ite imams, was asked about the creation of Eve from the ribs of Adam, his response (after claiming its outright falsehood) was: is Allah incapable of creating her from something other than his rib? He continues by summarizing the reports of his great-grandfathers from the Prophet about the creation of Eve as follows: Allah grabs a handful of clay and stirs it, then creates Adam out of it and Eve with the rest of it.²⁶ Rābi’ b. Anas, too, considering the verses that point to the creation of human beings out of clay and *naḥs wāḥida*, argues that Eve was created not from Adam but out of clay like Adam.²⁷ Moreover, Al-Ṭabarī says that these opinions about the creation of Eve were interpretations by the People

24 Although he largely agrees with Suleyman Ateş, he does not think that the interpretation of *naḥs* as Adam is correct. For him, *naḥs* means “essence,” and its femininity implies that it has a nature that is susceptible to reproduction and change. Thus, *naḥs* in the verse denotes the essence out of which Adam and his wife are created. On the other hand, verse 3:59 states that Adam is created out of soil, so there must be a link between these two verses. Moreover, it is recounted in verse 21:30 that every living being is created out of water. Once all these verses are taken into account, it is inferred that the life matter of human beings is composed of water, soil, and essence. The mixture of the elements in the soil with the water constitutes the essence of the human being. Just like the combination of the soul and body constitute the human being, H₂O, namely the combination of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, constitutes water. These two gases join with the carbon and nitrogen gases in the soil to compose the DNA of human beings. This is the *naḥs* or the essence of the human being. Agamic creation of Adam and Eve from this essence is later substituted by gametic reproduction. The essence of the gametic reproduction consists of the sperm of the male and the ovum of the female. The phases that are needed for the development of the ovum and the sperm also lead one to the single essence out of which Adam and Eve are created. The ovum and the sperm are made of blood; blood is made of the nutritional food that comes from the soil. The essence of the plants that grow in the soil consists of the water and the elements in the soil. This is why it is told in the chapter of Anbiyā’ that every human being is created out of water. Thus, all humankind is created indirectly out of water, if not directly, as in the case of Adam and his wife. As a result, Allah says in the first verse of the chapter of Nisā’ that He created the humankind from one *naḥs*, not from Adam. Bayraktar Bayraklı, *Kur’an Tefsiri*, V (Yeni Bir Anlayışın Işığında Kur’an Tefsiri, İstanbul: Bayraklı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001), 19–24.

25 Mūsā Jār Allāh, *Hatun*, ed. Mehmet Görmez (Ankara: Kitabiyat Yayınları, 1999), 116–117.

26 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *al-Mizān* IV, 146–147; al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma’ al-Bayān* IV, 9.

27 al-Aynī, *Umda al-Qārī* XV (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2001), 292.

of the Book or are taken from the Torah.²⁸ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, too, having expressed his criticisms about the creation from the rib bone, subscribes to the idea that all human beings are created out of soil regardless of gender. This is because Allah rendered semen, an element originally from the soil, to be an instrument for the continuation of humankind.²⁹ Namely, both Adam and his wife are created out of soil.

The problem of evolution that prevails in Shi'ite and Sufi thought comes forth within the framework of creation. In this matter, Ṭabāṭabā'ī argues for the impossibility of Adam's having evolved from another living being that existed before him. For him, the creation of Adam and Eve as the first human beings is original and there is no similar living thing that could be their origin. Thus, the development and evolution of human beings from another species is out of the question, whereas it is arguable that human beings evolved within themselves. That is because research shows that the Earth was at first covered completely with water and only afterward did the land appear with the retreat of waters. In this process compounds made of water and soil emerged. From these compounds aquatic animals originated first, followed by amphibians, land-dwelling animals, and finally human beings. All these developed after the evolution of the soil compounds, and in every phase of the evolution the development took place within itself. Thus, the transition materializes from plants to aquatic animals, then to amphibious animals, then to land-dwelling animals, and then to human beings. The evidence for this is the perfection in the structures of these beings—the gradual development from simplicity to complexity and the evolutionary process that is observed through the scientific method. No experiment or life experience has proven the evolutionary process from one species to another. As a result, species are understood as distinct entities lacking any evolutionary connection. Evolution is acceptable as long as it occurs within a given species, not as a process for the creation of a new species from an existing species. Therefore, it is inconceivable to argue that the independent and self-contained species of human beings has evolved from another species.³⁰

28 al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān* VI, 341.

29 Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān* IV, 142. The author, considering the creation of Adam and the prostration of angels before him, argues that it is one extreme to say that the person that is mentioned here is not Adam but the whole humankind represented by him. The other extreme is to consider that there is more than one Adam. For him, the latter is a heresy.

The Reflection of the Problem in the Hadith

After weighing the interpretations of relevant verses, it is also helpful to consider the appropriate hadith. However, due to their abundant nature and various chains of transmission, it is necessary to first classify relevant hadith into two categories: those in the Nine Books³¹ and those that are found in the Qur'an commentaries based on Prophetic reports. Moreover, it is useful to divide the hadith that are found in the Nine Books into two additional categories because some passages seem to make a connection between women and the rib without mentioning Eve. The first of the two is as follows, "Woman is bent like the rib bone. You break it if you want to straighten it but you can make use of it while it is still bent".³² The second: "Counsel benevolence about women because they are created out of a bent bone. The most bent portion of the rib is at its beginning. You break it if you want to straighten it and if you leave it intact it remains bent. Thus, counsel to each other benevolence about women".³³ A great majority of scholars interpreted these hadith as referring to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib in conjunction with the Qur'anic verses. In other words, these

30 Ibid.,143–144.

31 The nine books refers to the most authoritative hadith collections according to Sunni authorities. This includes the six major collections with the addition of Mālik, Ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Dārimī.

32 al-Bukhārī, "Nikāḥ,"79; Muslim, "Raḍḍā'a,"65; al-Tirmidhī, "Ṭalāq,"12. As for the evaluation of the hadith, the report that is identified as the first version uses the preposition of similitude "ka"; this means that it is not about the creation of the woman but the conditions and the fashion of her nature. The conditions of her nature, like delicacy and fragility, are represented here with the bent rib. Thus, the Prophet must have referred to the psychological structure of women rather than to how Eve is created. The fact that the hadith scholars classified these hadith under the heading "treating women well" demonstrates that the function of these reports is not to explain the first creation or the creation of the woman. Suleyman Ateş notes that Abd al-Ra'ūf Munāwī reported the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam by using *qīla* (it is said) to make sure that he does not agree with the report. This shows that the subject of the hadith is not the creation of the woman. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūtī, who edited *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān, argues while interpreting the phrase "the woman is created out of the rib," the creation here is not genuine and that it means "the woman is created in a bent nature." In fact, the wording of this hadith is similar to the verse of "man is created of haste" (al-Anbiyā' 21:37). Although it literally means that the human being is created out of haste, its real meaning is that the human being is hasty. Al-Arnā'ūtī, too, focuses on the crookedness of the rib and explains the hadith along this line. Amīr 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān bi-Tartīb Ibn Balbān* IX, ed. Shu'ayb Arnā'ūtī (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Risāla, 1993), 485–486.) Al-Zajjāj, too, interprets the verse of "man is created of haste" as "man is hasty." The wording of the verse as such reveals the culture from which it is written: Arabs make sense of metaphors because Arabs use the form "x is created of y" to emphasize the excess in one's nature. For example, the expressions "you are one of the people who jest" (*anta min la'b*) and "you are created from jest" (*khuliqtā min la'b*) mean that the person in question is jests excessively. al-Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* III, ed. 'Abd al-Jalīl 'Abduh Shalabī (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1988), 392. Namely, this expression is understood to describe a person who not physically created out of jokes, but rather one that has the attribute of jesting to an excessive degree.

33 al-Bukhārī, "Nikāḥ,"80; "Anbiyā'"1; Muslim, "Raḍḍā'a,"61–62.

hadith were used as a tool to make sense of the obscure parts of the verse. First of all, it is necessary to examine the soundness of this hadith. If examined in terms of its transmission and text, neither versions of the hadith can be rejected on the grounds of problematic transmission alone. Nevertheless, when they are compared with each other, the first one containing the simile appears to be more acceptable and solid than the creation version. It is thought that these reports are not communicated from the Prophet for the first time—they instead go back to a period before the Torah and perhaps as far back as the time of Abraham. Considered chronologically, the most essential version in ancient reports is the one that demonstrates similitude; in fact, it draws attention to the dissimilarities in the Torah narration. Rather than mentioning women in a general sense, the version in the Torah states that the first woman, Eve, was created out of Adam's rib. However, with the exception of the elements of the rib bone and creation, there is no commonality between the Torah and the reports attributed to the Prophet. The version with similitude is prevalent in the Nine Books, while the creation version becomes more widespread in later sources. This shows that the idea of the creation of women from the rib becomes gradually more dominant with the passage of time and that reports and perceptions that are derived from the Torah increasingly proliferate in the Islamic community. Ultimately this means the version with similitude transformed into the creation version or, possibly, the creation version was attributed to the Prophet thereafter.³⁴

The second hadith is reported from Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās, "When Allah expelled Satan from the Paradise and put Adam in it, Adam remained alone in there. There was nothing to eliminate his solitude. Allah made him sleep for a while, extracted one of his rib bones from his left side, filled the ensuing void in with flesh and created Eve from that rib bone."³⁵ When Adam woke up he found a wom-

34 Cemal Ağırman, *Kadının Yarattığı*, 127, 147, 177–179. For the evaluation of the reports individually, see 53–127. It is observed once again that the idea of Eve being created out of Adam's rib was a widespread belief and assumption among Arabs during the lifetime of the Prophet. It is possible that this belief survived in the form of a hadith. Even if it is conceded that the Prophet uttered this phrase, he must have reported it in a simile or metaphor in parallel with the prevalent opinion. Talip Özdeğ, *Kur'an ve Cinsiyet Ayrımcılığı* (Ankara: Fecr, 2005), 108. Müsâ Jâr Allâh, too, argues that there is nothing in this hadith that could pass as evidence for the phrase, "Eve was extracted from the left rib of Adam." The expression, "they are created out of rib," is like the verse, "Allah created you from haste." What differs is just the wording. In the hadith, men are invited to be caressing and compassionate. The verse, on the other hand, refers to the divine power that transforms the essence of the human being. However, it does not intend to vilify men or women because of the feebleness in their essence in any way. (Müsâ Jâr Allâh, *Hatun*, 117–118.)

an sitting next to him and asked her: ‘Who are you?’ She answered, ‘A woman’. When Adam asked, ‘Why are you created?’ she said, ‘So that you find peace with me’. When the angels asked, ‘What is her name?’ he said, ‘Eve’. When they asked, ‘Why is she called Eve?’ he said, ‘Because she is created out of living matter.’³⁵ It appears that this report refers not explicitly to the matter of Eve’s creation, but to the purpose of her creation and to the etymological sense of her name. The only commonality that this report has with the Qur’anic references is the fact that Eve is created for the tranquility of Adam. Eve is created to alleviate Adam’s troubles and to comfort him while he was wandering in the Paradise in a state of boredom and desolation.³⁷ The text emphasizes the meaning and etymology of Eve’s name, deduced from the word “living” to support the argument that she is created from Adam. An additional argument explores the possibility that the woman is called “imra’a” because she is created out of man (mar’), and “Eve” because she is the mother of all living beings.³⁸

Actually, there exist a variety of other narratives about the creation of Eve. To elaborately analyze each narrative is beyond the scope of this article. The internally contradictory nature of these narratives, along with the fact that they follow the biblical accounts, are the most serious problems to be addressed. When enumerating these narratives, al-Ṭabarī stresses the fact that their sources are pre-Islamic. The very time of Eve’s creation is one of the most glaring contradictions. According to what Suddī reported from Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas’ūd, the creation of Eve took place after the expulsion of Satan from Paradise—a period in which Adam was completely alone. Thus, Eve must have been created when Adam was in Paradise. However, in other passages, Allah gave the command of entering Paradise after Eve was created.³⁹ Some hadith have also been embellished with fantastic details that elaborate on these reports. For instance, one such narrative reported by Ibn

35 Thus, Genesis says that Allah caused a deep sleep to overcome the man, and, while he was asleep, took a rib bone of his, covered it with flesh, made a woman out of it and gave her to the man (Genesis 2:21–24).

36 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* III, 2–3; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* I (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 173–174; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. I, 449.

37 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* I, 173–174.

38 Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* I (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1993), 307.

39 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* III, 2; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* I, 5. According to reports from Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas’ūd, Eve is created in Paradise, while Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī argues that Eve was created before Adam entered Paradise. Others believe that Eve was created when Adam was taught the names. According to the majority of exegetes, the creation of Eve became inevitable when Adam was left in solitude after his fall from Paradise. Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* I, 307.

‘Abbās and ‘Umar is: “Allah sent an army of angels and they carried Adam and Eve on a golden throne on which sultans would be carried. Their robes were made of light and each of them had a golden crown embellished with rubies and pearls. Adam had around his waist a belt adorned with pearls and rubies”⁴⁰ It is clear that interpreters were led to different conclusions after considering the fact that the Qur’an directly mentions the creation of Adam, but ignores the way in which Eve was created. Moreover, both the similarities of these narratives to biblical accounts and their disparities from the style of sound hadith reinforce the possibility that they came from a different source. The Torah, on the other hand, engages with this issue in a detailed manner. Since Islamic sources are silent on the issue, non-Islamic information in the literature must have been the result of a general tendency on the part of Muslim scholars to fill in the blanks with biblical and Talmudic sources.⁴¹ Unfortunately, what may have seemed like a minor detail to a scholar was amplified in later scholarship.

An assessment of the narratives that appear to be inspired by the creation myths of different religions and cultures will be made. It should be noted first that such stories and narratives exist in all religions. The criterion to evaluate the truthfulness of the reports should be crafted not through various narratives and cultures, but from the very framework of the Qur’an itself. In other words, since it is possible that the creation myths outside the Qur’an are distortions of reality, it is necessary to employ solid and authentic sources when attempting their interpretation. It is accepted that the Qur’an, in comparison to other religious scriptures, is today in its original state. Within the scheme of creation told in the Old Testament, it is recognized that woman was created out of Adam’s rib and is thus a dependent, second-

40 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* III, 3. Research shows that among the reports that are connected with biblical sources, those on the creation are at the forefront. This supports the argument that many issues that the Qur’an mentions briefly are later given details through Jewish sources. The fact that the name of Ibn ‘Abbās is regularly encountered in such reports shows that these reports entered into Islamic literature through him. Namely, Talmudic knowledge and various reports and phrases that belong to the Jewish literature have entered into Muslim literature in this way or were borrowed from Jewish apocryphal texts. Özcan Hıdır, “İsrailiyat-Hadis İlişkisi,” (Ph.D. diss.; İstanbul University, 2000), 346–347; Hatice K. Arpağuş, *Osmanlı Halkının Geleneksel İslâm Anlayışı* (İstanbul: Ensar, 2006), 159–163, 166–167, 170–171.

41 Mustafa Erdem, *Hz. Âdem (İlk İnsan)* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 148–149. Earlier scholars’ approach to the issue like this constitutes only one corollary of misunderstanding the hadith. See Salih Kesgin, “Âyetleri Algılamada Hadis Algısının Etkisi,” in *Kur’an İlimleri ve Tefsir Usûlü*, ed. Bilal Gökçür, 477–490 (İstanbul: İlim Yayma Vakfı Kur’an ve Tefsir Akademisi, 2009) about the negative effects of the use of hadith out of context.

ary, and deficient being. In Greek mythology, the woman is created to tilt the balance in the battle between the gods and the demi-gods—and though the gods have the shape of human beings, they are considered to have a demonic nature different than human beings. Cultural interactions can explain the fact that in some exegetical works, the traditional perceptions of biblical narratives are dominant. It is common knowledge among cultural interaction theorists that when two cultures encounter similar elements, each transfers its own element to the other and new elements develop over older ones. Since Islamic tradition does not lock the gates to the intrusion of other cultural elements, these myths and reports have entered into the Islamic corpus through the historical process. Indeed, Islamic tradition, with the prerequisite that certain narratives are not explicitly against the foundations of Islamic belief, evaluates the narratives on the basis that some can be confirmed and some cannot.⁴² Since topics like the creation are not among the canons of belief or the rulings of law, it is acceptable that different cultural bodies of knowledge can be used in their interpretation. In that respect, these cultural elements should be evaluated by taking the Qur'an and the original sources of Islam as the points of departure.

Examples from the Accounts of the Creation of Woman

This issue has not remained a minor element in exegetical works; rather, it has developed into a widely discussed topic, with attempts to derive legal rulings from it. For instance, the idea that Eve is created out of Adam's rib bone led to the legal conclusion that she is a part of him. Following this ruling, it was determined that the male child's urine is more pure than the urine of a female child. While it is necessary to rinse away the urine of a female child to purify something on which it falls, it is sufficient to only sprinkle some water on the urine of a male child. This issue is based on a hadith found in the compilation of Ibn Māja. The difference in cleanliness, despite the sameness of the water, is asked of Imam al-Shāfi'i, and he answers by going back to the story

42 Although there is extensive literature about this issue, it would be enough to look at the following book for a fair evaluation: al-Dhahabī, *al-Isrā'iliyyāt fī al-Tafsīr wa-l-Ḥadīth* (Dimāshq: Dār al-Imān, 1995).

of the creation of Eve from the rib bone of Adam. He opines that the urine of a male child is made of soil and water, whereas that of a female child is made of blood and flesh.⁴³ In the commentary for this hadith, having discussed its legal aspects and remarked that it is a matter of pre-Islamic culture, Subkī explains this difference between the urine of a male and a female child by referring to the general tendency among pre-Islamic Arabs of loving their sons more than their daughters.⁴⁴ This issue is also carried into the discussion of the inheritance rights of a hermaphrodite whose sexuality is not decisive. If this person has the characteristics of both genders—like a beard, breasts and other sexual organs—it is suggested to check out his/her left rib to see if he/she has the smallest rib. Since Eve is created out of the smallest rib, men do not have one on their left side. If the hermaphrodite has a smaller amount of rib bones than a biologically normative woman, his/her share is determined as if he/she is a man.⁴⁵ As an extension of the same idea, it is thought that men get more beautiful as time passes because Adam is created out of soil. It is claimed, on the other hand, that women age less beautifully because they are created out of rib bone and heart flesh.⁴⁶

Conclusion and Assessment

In light of all of the above explanations and interpretations, it may be gleaned that the thought of the People of the Book has played a decisive role in the interpretation of *naḥs wāḥida*, both in Sūra al-Nisā', along with other verses, and in establishing the belief that Adam is the

43 Ibn Mājah, "Kitāb al-Ṭahārah," 77 (hadith no. 525).

44 al-Subkī, *al-Manḥal al-'Adīb al-Mawrūd*, vol. III (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 1974), 246–250.

45 al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* I, 450.

46 Tha'labī, *'Arā'is al-Majālis* (Cairo: No publisher, 1301/1884), 22. There are a number of ways to understand whether this issue has any relevance to our time. For that purpose we consulted the questions that were asked to the response bureau of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (and we thank Dr. Nevin Meriç for the valuable information that she provided us). It is detected that the way in which these questions are asked is very important. While sometimes a question is asked through a desire to learn the truth, other times a question is posed to only confirm the beliefs already held. These questions and approaches can be summarized as follows: (I) Women are created of men's rib bones, which can be broken suddenly and should not be oppressed. (II) Women are crooked creatures because they are created of men's ribs. It is futile to try to correct them. (III) Women are unfinished and deficient because they are created of Adam's rib. (IV) It is said in the Chapter of Women that Eve is created of Adam's rib; is this true? (V) What is the purpose of Eve's creation from Adam's rib? (VI) What is so special about the rib out of which women are created? Why not another limb?

father of humankind. This idea has also drawn authentication from irrelevant reports. Those who first used the proof text, however, arrived at different conclusions. Despite the Qur'an's insistent emphasis on the creation of humanity out of soil and clay, the creation of Eve as such is ignored and instead draws on other sources for validation.

Although there is no doubt that the creation of humans is based on water and soil, the Qur'an does not provide the details of the different phases through which it passed. When the society to which it was revealed is taken into account, the fact that the Qur'an treats the creation so concisely makes one think of three equally plausible possibilities:

- a. That the audience has detailed knowledge of the issue.
- b. Since the details of creation are not relevant to the point the Qur'an makes in that context, it is left intentionally brief.
- c. That the Qur'an talks about something in the realm of the unseen (*ghayb*), which cannot be expressed by deficient human language.⁴⁷

If we start off with the first possibility, it can be understood that narratives about creation were commonly known and accepted among the majority of people. As a matter of fact, some mythical narratives in circulation at the time of the Prophet show the prevalent *jāhili* beliefs, and point to narrations going as far back as the Sumerians. It also suggests the probability that some of these creation myths from other religions and cultures had leaked into the Bible. As a result, together with the assumption that people in the context of the revelation of the Qur'an were aware of such narratives, it appears that the Qur'an brought fresh perspectives on them. In the ongoing transition and transformation of perspectives, the method of the Qur'an was one of converting what people already knew to a new reality. For example, the Qur'an takes into account the current beliefs of people about the creation yet steers them towards a new truth. The truth that the Qur'an endorses is simple: the origin of human beings is a single essence or substance, of which both the first man and the first woman are created, and from which humanity has multiplied. Thus the Qur'an brings a fresh outlook to the issue by addressing the belief that Eve was created from Adam, and explaining the creation of both from one single essence. Faced with the unseen nature of the features of the

47 Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 20.

first creation, the Qur'an prefers to allude to it succinctly without further elucidation. As such, it implies that there is another dimension of the creation that concerns the sciences of biology, physics, and astronomy and urges humanity to explore this further.

If the second possibility is taken into account, the verse about creation from a single *nafs* reminds people that all are derived from the same origin and, at the same time, urges humans to piety. More specifically, in this verse, the Qur'an calls people to piety by making a reference to the creation. As a result, the fundamental value here is not how human beings were created, but rather the importance of piety that can be drawn from the sameness of our collective origins. In the following verse, like the aforementioned verse in Sūra Four (Nisā'/Women), Allah addresses all human beings and urges them to be pious:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ

“O mankind! be conscious of your Sustainer; surely the violence of the Last Hour is an awesome thing” (al-Ḥajj 22/1).

In short, Allah calls all human beings to piety in both verses. However, in the first one He does it by referring to the creation, and in the second to the end of time. While doing this, Allah does not decree rulings about the physical beginning and the end of the universe or the biological beginnings of human beings and their end. The fact that the Qur'an touches upon these issues, while also making references that could be subject to scientific debate, demonstrates that the Qur'an assigns great importance to these sciences. At the same time, it leaves the scientific dimensions of the discussion to relevant branches of science and encourages people to engage with them.

The point we have arrived at supports the third possibility stated above. It is widely accepted that the Qur'an engages with a realm that is unseen, and it contents itself with mere allusions and refrains from offering clear explanations. It only says that the human being comes from dust (Al-ʿImrān 3/59; al-Kahf 18/37; al-Ḥajj 22/5; al-Rūm 30/20; Fāṭir 35/11), from clay (al-Anʿām 6/2; al-Sajda 32/7; al-Šaffāt 37/11; Šād 38/71), from a quintessence (of clay) (al-Muʿminūn 23/12), from the essence of a humble fluid (al-Sajda 32/8) and from water (al-Anbiyāʾ 21/30), and thus informs us that the human being gathers all elements in its composition. However, the phases that the initial materials of

creation (soil, water, and clay) go through are still in the realm of the unseen for human beings. Of course this does not mean that human beings cannot comment on these through scientific endeavors. Indeed, the whole venture from past to present that we summarized here is the sum of such comments and evaluations about this issue. Recent interpretations about the creation of human beings through agamic reproduction can be counted among these efforts that attempt to make the unknown knowable.

The emphasis on the fact that human beings are created in couples, while Allah points to the common origin of their creation, shows the importance of each member of the couple for the other. Indeed, the facts that couples find solace within each other and that Allah gave them feelings like love and compassion demonstrate that Allah assigned a certain value for both members of a couple in the created system and provided necessary ingredients for a balanced association. In fact, the Qur'an mentions this as being among the signs of Allah (al-Rūm 30/21) to show how important this is and how man and woman cannot find their place in the world without each other. It is unacceptable on the part of Islam and its believers to articulate the idea that woman was created from the crooked rib of man—and, indeed, not from the most crooked bone on the right side, but from the left side. It is impossible to argue that the man and the woman have the same value in society and that they share life equally after taking such an approach. When these interpretations are taken as truth, the woman's status falls to a secondary level in the existential plane and she becomes an instrument of the man, who occupies the primary level. This understanding threatens the balance between man and woman to the detriment of the woman. Couples should rather align themselves properly in order to sustain the system that Allah provided on the Earth as a sign of His existence. It is enough for that purpose to hearken to the message of the Qur'an, which transcends time.