

The Intelligent

Allahﷻ revealed the first Ayaat of His Kalaam (His Word) and said:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Alaq 96: 1. Read! In the Name of your Rabb, Who created (all that exists)

Imam Ibn Al Qayyim Al Jauziyya said, 'There are two books of Allahﷻ. There is the Open Book which is the Universe and all that He created which is full of Ayaat (Signs by which we recognize him) and there is the book that must be opened to read His Ayaat; The Qur'an. That is why Allahﷻ referred to His Open Book when He began His Revelation. The invitation is for us to look around ourselves and see what Allahﷻ created and ask, 'How can I recognize my Rabb in this?'

I want to draw your attention to the difference between looking and seeing. It is the same as the difference between hearing and listening. It is the difference between dealing with life mechanically or intelligently. And in that is a world of difference. Looking at best, registers the image. Seeing helps us to understand not only what we are looking at but what that means for us. When you see, you recognize.

If you are walking in Kruger National Park in South Africa with one of the Rangers and you look at a lion lying in the shade of a thorn bush, you know that it is a lion. But if you see it stand up to acknowledge your presence, then crouch down with respect and look at you with great intensity and love in its eyes and then you see the tip of its tail flick from side to side, you know, but only if you are seeing, that the love in its eyes is like the love in your eyes when you look at a juicy steak. It is indeed love for you. But not the kind which will make you happy. It is only when you see, that you realize your relationship with what you are seeing. Not when you merely look. And sometimes it is the difference between life and death.

It is the same with hearing and listening. You hear a person speak about their relationship but only if you listen to them, will you hear the pain or joy, the hopes and aspirations or the fears and apprehensions, which are what define the state and future of that relationship. Allahﷻ told us to see (not only look) and to listen to (not only hear) His Ayaat and called those who do, Al Ulil Albaab (People of intelligence).

How do we define intelligence? Those who ace IQ tests? Or EQ tests? Those who are good at math and can do sums in their heads? We have the theory of multiple intelligences and then we have those who say that, it is one of the many 'conventional wisdom' type theories, which basically means that it is false. Let us see how the Creator of intelligence defined intelligence, because that is a definition we can rely on. Allah ﷻ said about intelligence and intelligent people:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

A'al Imraan 3: 190. Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for people of understanding.
191. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, **and** think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): "Our Rabb! You have not created (all) this without purpose, glory to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire

There are three things in these two Ayaat, that I want to remind myself and you about. Firstly, it is the announcement that in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for people of understanding (intelligence). When we remind ourselves about this, we learn to see and not merely to look. We pay attention, we reflect, we ask ourselves, 'What am I seeing? What does it mean?' We do that because we know that a sign is not important in itself. It is important because it points to something or tells us about a truth which lies hidden; visible only to the one who can read the signs. Think of a tracker on a hunt. Think of a physician doing clinical diagnosis. Think of a teacher looking at the behavior of a new student. Think of a parent, looking at their child. Think of a driver looking at a traffic light turning green or red. All are reading signs. All know the importance of reading those signs correctly which can have a very significant impact on themselves and others.

Those who can't read signs, are headed for trouble. Therefore, we know from this Ayah that the Creation is full of signs in which we can recognize our Creator, Allah ﷻ.

In the second Ayah, Allah ﷻ describes Al Ulil Albaab (People of understanding/intelligence). He mentions two things and the relationship between them. He says that they are people who remember Allah ﷻ in every aspect of their lives (standing, sitting and lying down) **AND** who think deeply (reflect, introspect, research, experiment, search, discover) about the Creation. I want to draw your attention to two things. One, is the sequence of the two signs of people of intelligence that Allah ﷻ mentioned: First, they know Allah ﷻ, recognize and worship Him and are concerned about His Pleasure in every aspect of their lives. What is the meaning of Dhikrullah? It is not the mere repetition of the names and attributes of Allah ﷻ or to simply read the Qur'an for Thawaab (blessing and reward) or to pray to discharge a responsibility which is often seen as a burden and not much more. These are people for whom remembering Allah ﷻ means to mold their lives in accordance with His Will. They know that when they do this, it is for their own benefit. And so, they do it willingly, joyously and without hesitation.

The second quality in this sequence is that these people reflect on what Allah ﷻ created and ask 'How?' and 'Why?'. It is not that every 'how' and 'why' can be answered, but it is a mindset that is deliberate, thoughtful, enquiring, introspective and it produces results. It helps the person to understand himself or herself, most of all and then even more importantly, to understand their relationship with their Rabb (Creator, Sustainer, Protector, Provider, Nourisher). Every scientific discovery for such people is a lens to see the power and glory of Allah ﷻ. Every new tool helps them to look further or deeper. They marvel at the fact that the area of the sky that is blocked out by one grain of sand held on the tip of your finger, contains perhaps, not hundreds, not thousands but millions of galaxies the size of our own Milky Way. So, how big is the Universe and how Glorious and Magnificent is the One who created it all? They look inward at one cell and its membrane which has gateways which let in some things and keep out others. A single cell that has memory. A cell that has a lifespan of days, but when it dies, its memories remain alive so that you, the one who is living with death, every minute of your life, still retain continuity with your past and live on as if

you are immortal. Please note that Allahﷻ didn't call either of these qualities as a sign of intelligence in itself.

He used the pronoun **AND**. Not **OR**. It is the combination of these two qualities and that too, in this sequence, which produces and is a sign of intelligence and leads to understanding. With either of these by itself or if the sequence is not followed, we have misguidance and ignorance, which sometimes masquerades as knowledge.

The Qur'an teaches us how to approach science. Science is a tool to help us recognize our Rabb by seeing the signs of His Glory and Majesty in His Creation. I want you to watch this wonderful documentary on Netflix called, 'One strange rock'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrC4vDcWmxk>

And a short video on YouTube called, 'How big is our universe?'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC7yFDb1zOA>

There is no conflict between the Qur'an and science. The issue is to use the method that Allahﷻ taught us, to approach science and to look at it with seeing eyes.

When these intelligent people see the universe with eyes that recognize signs, they say, *"Our Rabb! You have not created (all) this without purpose, glory to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.*

That is what I mean by recognizing signs. It means to recognize our relationship with our Creator and to remember that one day, we will meet Him. It is when we do this, that we push the boundaries of knowledge and are able to see beyond the curtains of creation to the Hand of the Creator.