

# The Branching Out of Secrets in the Exposition of the Meaning of Benedictions Upon the Chosen Prophet

*Dawḥat al-Asrār fī Ma'nā al-Ṣalāt 'ala al-Nabī al-Mukhtār*

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(*quddisa rūhahu*)

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*may his shortcomings be covered with Allah's mercy*

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## In the Name of Allah, the Universally Merciful, the Singularly Compassionate

It was requested from the great master of the Path, famous for the transmission of the invocation of the Supreme Divine Name, Mawlānā Abu'l Abbās Shaykh Sīdī Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafa al-'Alawī al-Mustaghānimī, may Allah grant us and the Muslims his good-pleasure and extend his life, that he compose some words dealing with the prayer of benediction (*ṣalawāt*) upon the Prophet ﷺ, explicating its profound meanings. So he responded to this request – may Allah be ever-pleased with him – saying:

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I praise You O Allah with every heart and tongue, O You Who elects the sincere ones to the highest degrees of *Ihsān!* You bestow Your grace upon whom You will, and You are the possessor of all grace and bounty and bestowal. I witness that You are One and Only, Singular in Being and in granting being, and I witness that our liege-lord and master Muḥammad is Your messenger, who has the complete capacity to receive Your most perfect theophanies (*tajalliyāt*). So send Your glorious blessings upon him according to the amount of Your generosity, with glorious blessings (*ṣalāt*) and strengthening peace (*salām*) which fulfill his desired purpose from You; and the same upon his household and companions who stand upright by the aid of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*). Have mercy O Allah upon those righteous ones who remain in this community, and rain upon their bodies and spirits and hearts from the clouds of mercy, and support them and strengthen them with every argument (of truth), proof, and wisdom...Amen!

As to what follows:

I have received the letter of the one who is the reason behind composing this essay, namely, the honest truthful one, our brother in Allah Sīdī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥabīb al-Idrīsī al-Ḥasanī ibn Mawlānā al-Ṣiddīq...may Allah cause you and us to be among those who are faithful to the covenants we commit to with Allah.

Sayyidī, after our finding blessing in your qualities, and inquiring about all of your states, and giving you greetings of peace which surrounds you from all sides as you are worthy of, we have indeed been honored with your letter after we received it. By it were our hearts expanded and our reflections made lofty, so that we found it to be a fruitful garden and a perfect rose, and it suffices as an indication of the rank of its writer, especially due to the Prophetic vision included within it, may the choicest blessings and purest greetings be upon its subject! Indeed, this vision you had of the Prophet ﷺ is nothing but a Divine grace which you are obliged to be grateful for, and we praise Allah for your likes still existing in this world.

As for what you requested from us concerning the meanings contained in the specific prayer of benediction which Allah has inspired your tongue to utter, then we have no more in this regard than what you have – and Allah knows best – only that for the purpose of fulfilling your request and serving you, and gaining blessing from the *Ṣalāt* upon the Prophet ﷺ, we write the following; and I admit to every shortcoming in this regard...

The meaning of the *Ṣalāt* (prayer of benediction) varies according to its sender and receiver. As for its sender, if it is Allah then its reality is different from that which is due from His creations. For from Him it is an action, and from other than Him it is speech, which cannot mean other than an entreaty (*du'ā*), which is for mercy along with exaltation, or it could be an entreaty for something else, as we shall see. In any case, it is considered a *du'ā* when it comes from the creation.

Furthermore, if it is from Allah, then its meaning varies according to the receiving object of that *Ṣalāt*. It is widely understood that the *Ṣalāt* of Allah upon the commonality of the believers is not the same as His *Ṣalāt* upon the elect among them, ***“these are the messengers We favored, one above the other”***<sup>1</sup>. And if there are variations in the degrees of the elect, then it is even more obvious there be variations between the common. For some of them pray to be taken out of the darkness of *shirk* to the light of *Īmān*, and others pray to be brought from the light of *Īmān* to the secret of certitude, and others pray to be brought from the secret of certitude to direct vision...and so on.

To this I add: Allah has made His *Ṣalāt* upon His prophets and chosen ones to be the mirrored opposite of His curse (*la'nā*) upon His enemies. For the meaning of this curse is expulsion and distance and separation and the lowering of the veil over the cursed one. As for the meaning of His *Ṣalāt*, it is His endearment and love and proximity and theophanic manifestation for the object of His *Ṣalāt*, as he deserves. So if he is among the commonality of the believers, then his portion from Allah is His endearment over him with the mercies which he deserves. And if he is among the elect of the believers, then his portion from Allah is Him Himself, for he is not satisfied with anything less than Him. ***“Faces on that day will be shining resplendently, looking towards their Lord”***<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān 2:253

<sup>2</sup> Qur'ān 75:22-23

In addition to this, the elect vary among themselves according to the various theophanies (*tajalliyāt*) they receive. Among them are those to whom the Real (Most Exalted) draws close and makes Himself known thru His actions, and others He makes Himself known to them thru His Names, and others thru His Attributes, and others He makes Himself known to them thru His Essence, which is the “greatest sign” alluded to in the verse, **“indeed, he saw the greatest of the Signs of his Lord”**<sup>3</sup>. Had the meaning of the Ṣalāt upon the Prophet ﷺ been mercy as they claim, then it would be superfluous, for Allah already said about him that he is not sent except as a mercy to all the worlds<sup>4</sup>. In other words, Allah caused him to be the source (*‘ayn*) of mercy for the entire creation.

He ﷺ is always seeking further increase from Allah the Exalted. He said, “and the core delight of my eye was made to lie in the Ṣalāt,”<sup>5</sup> and “the truest words ever spoken by a poet are those of Labīd: ‘Indeed, everything other than Allah is falsehood’.”<sup>6</sup> Meaning, in his prophetic eye, everything is null and false, whether it be of this world or the next, except if it be connected with witnessing the perfections of the Divine Essence and the lights of the Divine Attributes.

So when the composer of this specific form of benediction discussed here had knowledge of his desired goals ﷺ, and that in the constant succession of mercy that flows upon and thru him he is not distracted from beholding the perfect Beauty of the Essence, the author entreated Allah to send the Ṣalāt upon him in accordance with his value and aspiration, so he said:

**“O Allah, send glorious blessings and strengthening peace – according to the variations of Your perfections in all of Your theophanies – upon our liege-lord and master Muḥammad, the first of the lights flowing from the ocean of the immensity of the Divine Essence, he who is verified in the meanings of the Divine Names and Attributes in the two worlds of inwardness and outwardness, the first to praise and worship with the various acts of devotion and drawing near, and the one who extends support to all existent beings in the spiritual and material worlds; and likewise upon his household and companions, with a Ṣalāt which lifts the veil from his noble face in the moments of vision and wakefulness, and causes us to come to know You and him in every degree and presence. And be mercifully gentle with us, O our Master, by virtue of his sublime rank, in every movement, stillness, moment, and passing thought. Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Might, above what they describe, and peace be upon the messengers, and praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds.”**

So it is as if he (the author) is saying:

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<sup>3</sup> Qur’ān 53:18

<sup>4</sup> Qur’ān 21:107

<sup>5</sup> Recorded by Nasā’ī in his Sunan, Ṭabarānī in his Mu’jam al-Awṣat and al-Ṣaghīr, Bayhaqī in his Sunan al-Kubrā, Hākim in his Mustadrak, Abū Ya’la in his Musnad, Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad, and others.

<sup>6</sup> Recorded by Bukhārī and Muslim in their Saḥīḥ, and Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah in their Sunan, and Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad.

“O Allah, You certainly know what Your Prophet desires from You, for he does not halt at anything below the direct and complete vision of Your Beauty (*Jamāl*), so incline towards him with Your affection, move closer to him, and make Yourself known to him, and manifest Yourself to him with all the variations of the perfections of Your Essence which are in all of Your theophanies of acts – or we could say the sensory (*hiss*) and the meaning (*ma'nā*) – and make that perpetual for him. Safeguard him from the dangers of that theophanic manifestation upon him, so that he does not turn away from Your desire from him by turning towards his desire from You.”

This is the meaning of the subtle gentleness and mercy (*Lutf*) and the safeguarding (*Hifz*) which every one who arrives to Allah (to His *Ḥaqq*) is in the most pressing need of. It is referred to in the Shari'ah as *Salām* (strengthening peace), as in His saying, “**and their greeting in it will be ‘Peace’**”<sup>7</sup> alluding to the inhabitants of the Garden and none else. For every possessor of Divine blessing does not ask from Allah except security and well-being in that blessing.

This is why they have made it a condition that the *Ṣalāt* and *Salām* (upon the Prophet) always be together, so that the necessary balance may be achieved and the great blessing may be completed from Allah to the receiver of the *Ṣalāt*. The *Ṣalāt* (blessings of Glory) in itself – even if it is a blessing from Allah – is not guaranteed to last and continue as it is, except if it is connected to and followed up with Peace (*Salām*) from Allah Most High. Therefore, as much as the *Ṣalāt* is a noble matter, the *Salām* is even more noble (but only in the sense of its succeeding after the *Ṣalāt*). As for *Salām* considered by itself, it does not equal the rank of the *Ṣalāt*. The meaning of this *Ṣalāt* is the Divine's close approach to the slave according to what he deserves and merits, while the meaning of the *Salām* is the attainment of safety within that mighty approach. So the *Salām* has no meaning outside the context of the *Ṣalāt*, which must precede it.

Furthermore, when the immense grant of the *Ṣalāt* from Allah to Sayyidina Muḥammad ﷺ was and is realized, without doubt, according to His Words, “**Indeed, Allah and His angels send Ṣalāt upon the Prophet...**”<sup>8</sup>, the command and request to the believers (to send him *Ṣalāt*) came un-emphasized. In other words, He did not say *ṣallu ‘alayhi ṣalātan* as He said *wa sallimu taslīman* (a verb form implying emphasis). So it is as if He (Most High) is saying, “the theophanic manifestation and the close approach is already realized in abundance for Muḥammad ﷺ, so frequently ask for strength for him and firm-rootedness, and safety in his spiritual state of receptivity.” In reality, requesting strength and firm-footing for him means requesting it for his faithful community, and Allah knows best His intent.

So if you ask: why did some of the scholars allow for the invocation of *Salām* for non-Prophets (such as Sayyida Maryam for example), while none of the scholars allowed for the permissibility of invoking *Ṣalāt* for them? I say:

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<sup>7</sup> Qur'ān 10:10

<sup>8</sup> Qur'ān 33:56

We have mentioned previously that the meaning of the reality of the Ṣalāt is more exalted than that everyone (other than the Prophets or the angels) should partake of it in themselves, except in the case of it being thru subordination and dependency (to those Prophets). As for the Salām, the most that it can be said to mean is the request for safety and well-being from Allah for the receiving object in terms of his inward relationship with Allah. Therefore, it is fitting and appropriate for every individual among the believers according to his or her spiritual station (*maqām*), and because of this possibility, those scholars have permitted its invocation on behalf of non-Prophets.

Furthermore, the Prophets (upon them be blessings and peace) have been singled out with the blessing of receiving the Ṣalāt together with the Salām from Allah always at the same time, in contrast to the Awliyā'. For the Awliyā' could receive only the Ṣalāt from Allah, or could also receive the Salām but after a delay in time and not at once. For this reason, there might appear from them what would not appear from the Prophets, which would be in contradistinction to the norm of human natural (*tab'*) states. It might even be that there would appear from the Walī what would contravene the Sharī'ah, and that would only be due to the absence of Divine protection for the Walī in that state; and this would be considered receiving the Prophetic inheritance in other than its normal form.

As for the firmly-footed inheritors of the Prophets, there does not appear from them in the majority of cases anything which would contravene the Sharī'ah, or contradict the natural and normal state (*tab'*). And we are referring to here the sound and whole natural disposition, not the general commonly-seen disposition. This maintenance of the norm would be because of the transmission of Prophetic inheritance in its normal form. Therefore, by virtue of the combination of the Ṣalāt and Salām in the Prophet ﷺ, the possibility is actualized to receive his inheritance in its natural form unchanged (for otherwise it would not be possible). Furthermore, these two Divine graces – known in the Sharī'ah as *Ṣalāt* and *Salām* – are termed in the technical vocabulary of the Sufis “intoxication” (*sukr*) and “sobriety” (*sahw*), and “annihilation” (*fanā*) and “subsistence” (*baqā*), and other similar pairs...

Because the aspirations (*himma*) of the elect are above looking towards the creatures, they are constantly revolving around the Pivot of the Divine Names and Attributes, looking with intent and ardent desire towards what lies behind that, namely, the perfections of the Divine Essence. And Allah gives the slave in accordance with his *Himma*, and when the *Himma* is great, it does not ask for or seek except for greater things. In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ said, “If you ask Allah, then make the request great”<sup>9</sup>. And there is no request more noble, or aspiration greater, than that which turns away from the creation, and attaches to the True Sovereign...

As for his saying, “according to the variations of Your perfections,” it is not confined to its ascription to the Divinity (*uluhiyya*), for His perfections are infinite. For this

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<sup>9</sup> A ḥadīth of similar wording was recorded by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah in their Sunan

reason, he requested Him (Most High) to make Himself known to Muḥammad ﷺ with all of the variations of His perfections. In other words, whatever perfection of His He reveals to him ﷺ, there follows an even greater perfection. In this meaning Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabahānī said in his *Ḥamziyya*:

*“You do not cease to be glorified above every ‘above-ness’,  
rising and rising, there being no end or limit to the ascension.”*

...and so on, to what has no bounds, and **“the later state is better than the former”**<sup>10</sup>. The theophanic manifestations apply similarly in this regard, so there is no end or limit to them. **“If you enumerate the blessings of Allah, you will never number them”**<sup>11</sup>. Since this verse pertains to the Divine acts, it is all the more fitting that this infinitude apply to the Essence and Its Attributes, and **“Allah is indeed Vast, Knowing”**<sup>12</sup>.

Know also that it has become the habit of the *‘Ārifūn* to deposit and detail some of their experiential knowledge in the words of their salawat upon the noble Prophet ﷺ, which in turn becomes a means for the spiritual advancement of their students and followers, enabling them to realize some of the hidden aspects of the Divine Being and the realities of messenger-hood (*Risālah*). Along these lines, in this benediction, the (author) has described Muḥammad ﷺ as the first of the lights emanating from the Immense Ocean of the Divine Being. From this we understand that he ﷺ is the primal created light out of which flowed the springs of all created manifestations. It is reported that he ﷺ said, “The first thing that Allah created was my light...”<sup>13</sup>, and from that light all other lights came to be, and by it the various levels and degrees of existence became established.

Furthermore, the word “light” is an expression for that meaning which illuminates all things it comes into contact with, whether it be material or non-material. The former illuminates what is outward, and the later illuminates what is inward; the former is the share of the physical eyes (*abṣār*), the later is the share of the spiritual eyes (*baṣā’ir*). However, that which comes to mind first (when ‘light’ is mentioned) is the material light which allows one to see the outward physical manifestations, even though in reality it is secondary in relation to that which is covered (away from physical sight) in the hidden realm of the inward secrets (*sarā’ir*).

In whatever manner the inner root branches outward, its reality is always connected back to its origin in the Single Light: **“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth”**<sup>14</sup>... and that is the Absolute (*mujarrad*) Light. As for the secondary (*iḍāfi*) light – known and expressed as “Muḥammad” ﷺ – Allah (Most High) has described it with

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<sup>10</sup> Qur’ān 93:4

<sup>11</sup> Qur’ān 16:8

<sup>12</sup> Qur’ān 2:115

<sup>13</sup> Recorded on the authority of Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh in the *Muṣannaf* of Abdur-Razzāq, who was one of the Shuyūkh of Bukhārī and Muslim from whom they took many ḥadīths.

<sup>14</sup> Qur’ān 24:35

His saying: **“the similitude of His light is the niche”**<sup>15</sup>, where “His light” is Sayyidina Muḥammad ﷺ. Here, the similitude (*tashbīh*) is descriptive of the adjoining noun (*muḍāf*), and not the Object of adjointment (*muḍāf ilayh*) which is the Eternal Divine Light. In this way, the Divine Transcendence is absolved from being touched by any similarity, even though Transcendence (*tanzīh*) becomes Resemblance (*tashbīh*) from the viewpoint of **“wherever you turn, there is the Being of Allah”**<sup>16</sup>. However, each level of reality demands its own requisite description. Were it intended for the similitude to be applied to the Absolute Light itself, then only the pronoun would be used, and there would be no need to use the genitive construction; and instead of “niche” as an adjective, He would have used in its place “lamp”, due to the greater similarity between “lamp” and “light”. In addition, this would demand the confinement of all Inward within the Outward (leaving no more unmanifested Inward), making the “niche” and the “glass” other than the light, whereas in reality they are light upon light. Therefore, the object and its similitude become united in their aspect of being light, **“and to Allah do all affairs have their final return”**<sup>17</sup>.

It becomes clear from all this that He (Most Exalted) is an Absolute Light free from all materiality and adjointment and correlation with anything else, for **“there is nothing like Him”**<sup>18</sup>. The likeness of the created light from Him – named Muḥammad, and connected in a subtle manner to the Absolute Single Light – is the niche which holds a lamp from the Divine Secret, which is the case based on His Divine Subsistence being behind the existence of every substance (*jawhar*) and form (*‘arād*). “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth”, and the niche has the greatest share of the light of Allah. **“Whoever obeys the messenger has obeyed Allah”**<sup>19</sup>.

To summarize the above, all that became dense in existence from the Muḥammadan light was alluded to with the word “niche”, and all that became subtle in existence from that light was alluded to with the word “lamp”<sup>20</sup>. The lamp is the source of light for the glass and niche, and “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth”. A narration states that “Allah created the creation in darkness, then he showered upon them from His light”<sup>21</sup>; meaning He decreed (*qaddar*<sup>22</sup>) their creation in His Eternal Knowledge, then He manifested upon them a share of His *Wujūd*... and the context here has drawn us to the explanation of a Qur’ānic verse which is not our topic, and for which we will devote another writing – *in sha’Allah*.

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<sup>15</sup> Qur’ān 24:35

<sup>16</sup> Qur’ān 2:115

<sup>17</sup> Qur’ān 42:53

<sup>18</sup> Qur’ān 42:11

<sup>19</sup> Qur’ān 4:79

<sup>20</sup> Allah knows best the intended meaning of the author, however to the translator it seems that “glass” would be the more appropriate word here, due to “lamp” symbolizing the source of light behind both the subtle and dense manifestations in existence. It most likely is a typographical error.

<sup>21</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Imām Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ḥakīm, and others.

<sup>22</sup> Qaddar here literally means: He apportioned for each created thing a specific measure of being/existence (*wujūd*), or you can say pre-determined a specific capacity for each created thing’s share of *wujūd*.



The fundamental point is that all things which arise from the most holy emanation, varying in their hidden and physical aspects, have their common source in the Muḥammadan light. From this light branched out all the other lights, which include the heavens and the earth. Nor do we allow the solid density of material manifestations deceive us away from witnessing their source in the (subtle) rays of emanation from the Presence of Divine Holiness. The deception of established variance and complete separation between the outward manifestations arises from the inability of eyes to penetrate thru them. By absolving the Source from any deficiency, then such deficiency is removed from all effects coming from It. Turn your sight, therefore, to the original formation and primary creation, which is light upon light, **“then return your sight, do you see any disharmony?”**<sup>23</sup>. Of course not! You only see inward hiddenness and outward manifestation, and that manifestation is described as light. Whoever is guided to it is truly guided, and **“Allah guides to His light whom He wills”**<sup>24</sup>.

He ﷺ was asked, “do you see your Lord?” and he responded, “Light! How can I see Him?”<sup>25</sup>

I say: that blinding Light is the veil which prevents the Divine Essence from being perceived or comprehended. Therefore, His veil is also His manifestation, and from the intensity of that manifestation His Being became hidden! The ḥadīth mentions: “His veil is light”<sup>26</sup>. Due to the manifestation of that secondary light (Muḥammad ﷺ), the Absolute Eternal Light was veiled, and the Light is not perceived except in the light, nor is the hidden seen except in its outward manifestation. He ﷺ said: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*)”<sup>27</sup>, which means, “whoever has come to know me experientially has come to know the Real.” He ﷺ does not mean by “seeing him” seeing that physical form named Muḥammad ibn Abdillāh, but rather seeing his reality which flows out from the oceans of the Immensity of the Divine Being, for his ﷺ being is the locus of His Divine manifestation.

It is reported that He said: “Neither my earth nor my heaven can encompass Me, but the heart of My believing worshipper encompasses Me”<sup>28</sup>. That (Muḥammadan) heart is what manifests in all other (believing) hearts, and his spirit in all other spirits, and his self in all other selves. **“Your creation and your resurrection is all like that of**

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<sup>23</sup> Qur’ān 67:3

<sup>24</sup> Qur’ān 24:35

<sup>25</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Imām Muslim, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Tayālisī, Bazzār, and others.

<sup>26</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī, Abū Ya’la, Ibn Hibbān, and others.

<sup>27</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Bukhārī, Muslim, Imām Aḥmad, and many others.

<sup>28</sup> Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his Kitāb al-Zuhd recorded something similar as an Israelite tradition in connection to the Prophet Hizqeel (*alayh al-salām*). However, Ṭabarānī and others recorded with authentic (ḥasan) chains the following ḥadīth of similar import: “Allah has on the earth ‘containers’ (awani), and the most beloved of containers to Allah is the pure humble heart.”

*one soul*<sup>29</sup>. Whoever comes to know that soul ﷺ, and recognizes the spiritual meaning in the sensory form, then his portion of the rays from the Presence of Divine Holiness will never be depleted. Such a quality is only found among a few select individuals who were graced by Allah to have the requisite capacity and preparedness – above and beyond the common ability to perceive shared by the general rank of the believing worshippers – and these select ones include the Prophets and the elect of the Awliya’.

Based on the above, the author lauded the station of prophethood in his ﷺ being verified (*mutahaqqiq*) in the realities of the Divine Names and Qualities in both the hidden and manifest realms. Indeed, he alone is such in the most complete sense, while other than him has a share of that only thru inheritance from and connection to him ﷺ, for “the possessors of knowledge are the inheritors of the Prophets”.

Our statement that he ﷺ is alone in that complete verification is because he ﷺ is the primal manifestation with which the Divine Being manifested Himself; or, we can say in the same vein, he is the first locus on which fell the effects of the Divine Names and Qualities. Therefore, his ontological share of the hidden inward is in accordance with his share in outward manifestation, and similarly his share of “firstness” is as his share of “lastness”. By virtue of this he ﷺ became the great intermediary between the Real and His other creations, for he ﷺ stated: “I was a prophet while Adam was still between water and clay”<sup>30</sup> (i.e. as of yet uncreated potential); and his being sent as messenger was delayed until the end of the line of prophets in the world of forms. Thus, he combined between firstness and lastness, alluded to in his words, “We are the last ones, who precede before others (*sābiqūn*)”<sup>31</sup>.

In this way the thing comes full circle to end in itself, and the branch reverts to its root, as is the norm of Allah’s actions in His creation. ***“Verily, He Who commissioned you with the Qur’ān will return you to the original place of meeting”***<sup>32</sup>. He ﷺ also said, alluding to this meaning, “Time has now come full circle as it was the moment Allah created the heavens and the earth”<sup>33</sup>. From this we can understand that prophethood is a circle, or a ring of connected points, each point representing a prophet, and that point which gathers and seals both arcs of the circle represents Muḥammad ﷺ.

From the viewpoint of his unique status of being that gathering point he stated: “I am the leader of the children of Adam, and this is without boast”<sup>34</sup>. However, if we view

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<sup>29</sup> Qur’ān 31:28

<sup>30</sup> Recorded with slight difference in wording (“between spirit and body”) in the ḥadīth collections of Imām Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī, Bayhaqī (in his *Dalā’il*), Ḥakīm, Ibn Abī Shayba, Bazzār, Abū Nu’aym, Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, and many others, with authentic chains.

<sup>31</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad, Bayhaqī, Nasā’ī, Abū Ya’la, and others.

<sup>32</sup> Qur’ān 28:85

<sup>33</sup> Recorded in the *Saḥīḥ* collection of Bukhārī, and others.

<sup>34</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, Abū Ya’la, Ḥakīm, Ibn Hibbān, Ṭabarānī, Bayhaqī, Bazzār, Ibn Abī Shayba, Abdur-Razzāq, and many others.

each point of the circle in itself, we see that each of them can be a connecting point, and from this viewpoint of equality he stated: “It is not fit to elevate me above my brother Yūnus ibn Matta”<sup>35</sup>. “**We do not discriminate between any of His messengers**”<sup>36</sup>, because discrimination is a hole in the completeness of the circle of prophethood, and we have verified that it is one complete unit, its points interconnected with each other, its end point being also its beginning point.

Its reality is the great spirit (*rūḥ*) responsible for imparting revelation from Allah, and this is none other than the Muḥammadan being, the spirit blown into Adam. Therefore, he is the original point of the circle. The poet said – in the tongue of the Muḥammadan reality:

“Indeed, even if I appear to be a descendant of Adam,  
I have a subtle meaning in him which indicates my fatherhood”

Based on this, prophethood ultimately belongs to Muḥammad ﷺ in every point among the circle’s points it happens to appear, for as we said it is all one complete unit. Whoever beholds it as such – after the connection of its points – says, “**We do not discriminate between any of His messengers**”<sup>37</sup>; whereas whoever beholds it before such connection, or his aspiration does not reach to that view, then he says, “**We believe in some and disbelieve in some**”<sup>38</sup> and the part cannot contain the meaning of the whole. In this sense we can understand the reality of his being the seal of prophecy, which can be expressed in two ways: 1) that he is the point which connects the separate arcs of the circle, as mentioned before, and 2) that he is the whole circle itself. Prophethood is one meaning, and he ﷺ is its reality, so he is the seal of prophethood in every sense of the term.

We also said that the reality of prophethood is the great spirit which informs and relays from Allah, and not the physical body known and witnessed by the generality. This is the allusion behind the words of Uways al-Qaranī when he said: “You have only known Muḥammad ﷺ as the sheath knows the sword,” referring to that great spirit which descended into the body, just as the Eternal Word of Allah descended within the Immense Qur’ān. So the body indicates and points to the spirit, and the Book indicates the Eternal Divine Quality (of Speech).

Due to his distinguished virtue of being the relayer of revelation from Allah Most High from the first emanation of Holiness (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*), his noble spirit is also the one who took the solemn oath on behalf of all the spirits on the Day of Alast (***Am I not your Lord?***<sup>39</sup>) because he functions as the intermediary in every Divine

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<sup>35</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Bukhārī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, Hākim, Ṭabarānī, Bazzār, Abū Ya’la, and others with slight differences of wording between them.

<sup>36</sup> Qur’ān 2:285

<sup>37</sup> Qur’ān 2:285

<sup>38</sup> Qur’ān 4:149

<sup>39</sup> Qur’ān 7:172

communication; otherwise, what would be the value of his prophethood preceding the creation?

For this reason, the author said: “and he is the first praiser and worshipper with all acts of worship and means of approach”. His being the first praiser is because of his universal light-nature, whereas his being the worshipper with acts of devotion and drawing near is based on the particulars of his being. Imām Nabahānī said:

“Your light is universal, and the creation merely parts of it,  
O Prophet whose soldiers include all other prophets!”

Allah said, “**and all things We enumerate within a clear prototype (Imām)**”<sup>40</sup>, and there is none more clearly worthy of being a prototype than him.

The general allusions (*isharāt*) of the knowers (*‘Ārifūn*) indicates the envelopment and containment of all things in his reality ﷺ. Rational thought finds this indigestible without giving due consideration and effort in understanding the meaning of that envelopment. However, the one whom Allah takes by the hand and shows how the branch proceeds from its root finds that all things without exception are fully contained within the Muḥammad reality. Therefore, he ﷺ becomes the one who worships with all acts of worship and devotion in this sense. Believing in this takes little effort, but witnessing it is difficult due to the manifestations of variance and incompatibility seen within the different parts of existence, which block the normal view. This opens up only to the one who employs his vision to its fullest capacity and causes it to penetrate to the reality of things, in the aim that this view will appear clearly before him, and “**there is nothing except it glorifies His majesty in praise of Him**”<sup>41</sup>.

In any case, the continuance of the existence of variance in existence is insignificant in comparison to the greater universe, and “**none knows the soldiers of your Lord except He**”<sup>42</sup>. Variance in the viewpoint of Divine acceptance becomes harmony in the viewpoint of Divine Will, and “**had your Lord willed they would not have done it**”<sup>43</sup>. We find enough of an explanation in His Words: “**He said to the heaven and the earth ‘Come (into being) willingly or unwillingly,’ they both said, ‘We come willingly’**”<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, for everything we find repugnant in existence, we cannot continue to see any repugnance in it wherever our vision of his ﷺ reality falls, as the poet said:

“Every repugnant thing, when seen in relation to His Act,  
Rushes to bring before your view the forms of beauty”

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<sup>40</sup> Qur’ān 36:12

<sup>41</sup> Qur’ān 17:44

<sup>42</sup> Qur’ān 74:31

<sup>43</sup> Qur’ān 6:112. For example, how can the existence of Kufr be explained if it all is enveloped in his ﷺ light? Although existence of kufr is in contradiction to Divine acceptance and pleasure, it is still in harmony with the Divine Will and Plan.

<sup>44</sup> Qur’ān 41:11

There has occurred to us another example which will bring this understanding closer to you, and that is how the Qur’ān has gathered within it what one usually finds disparate in other than it. It included mention of sublime matters and base matters, Lordly matters and Pharaonic matters, examples of obedience and rebellion, and so on to no end. ***“We did not neglect a single thing in this Record”***<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, it shows variance from the viewpoint of what it discusses, and shows united harmony from the viewpoint of its original reality. We worship Allah by reciting words which entail blasphemy and disbelief, and by reciting words which point to the Divine Essence and Its Qualities. Every phrase among its phrases, in whatever point it discusses, ***“cannot be reached except by the purified”***<sup>46</sup>, and that is all in terms of its being attached to the Divine Speech. If, however, you strip them of their Divine origin and context, then it would be unlawful to utter them.

Along this understanding, whoever beholds the creation in its reality sees it as a “lamp within a niche,” seeing the niche from in front. The one who sees the niche from behind does not see it except as dark, because it does not open out to both sides. ***“The interior (of the wall) contains mercy, and the exterior brings forth torment”***<sup>47</sup>.

*“And it does no harm to the sun’s splendor in the least  
If the blind of sight does not see it.”*

As for the author’s words: “And the one who feeds support to all existent beings in the spiritual and material worlds”, they exclude only the realm of Divine Eternity. Therefore, everything else is fed from his reality ﷺ in the manner of the branch’s being fed from its root.

And his words “and likewise upon his household (*āl*) and companions” are clear to understand for everyone in their outward sense. The subtle allusion behind the former refers to the one who seeks and desires (*āla*) with his whole being to reach to the Muḥammadan spring; in other words, to become a close relation to him, so that he becomes included among his ﷺ household, as the Prophet ﷺ said: “Salmān is among our household”<sup>48</sup>. And Imām Nabalusi said:

*“Oh what glory in the tie which bonded Salmān to (him)  
By the utterance of ṬāHā, the messenger of Allah, the noblest Prophet!  
“Salmān is among us, indeed part of our household,  
Even though he is Persian and not an Arab.”*

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<sup>45</sup> Qur’ān 6:38

<sup>46</sup> Qur’ān 56:79

<sup>47</sup> Qur’ān 57:13

<sup>48</sup> Recorded in the ḥadīth collections of Hākim, Ṭabarānī, Ibn Abī Shayba, Abū Nu’aym, Ibn Sa’d in his *Tabaqāt*, Ibn ‘Asakir in his *Tarīkh*, and others with authentic chains.

This is the true tie of relation (*nasab*) which is bequeathed among the members of the Folk (*al-Qawm*<sup>49</sup>).

As for the subtle allusion behind “companions”, it includes those who share in his exalted station (of *walāya*), such as his brothers among the Prophets and the elite of the elect among the Awliyā’, keeping in mind the rankings of superiority among them: **“these are the messengers sent by Us, some We favored above others”**<sup>50</sup>. All those not included in the above group are not granted a share of the Divine Ṣalawāt in the sense explained in this letter. However, in its general sense, it includes within its scope every believer<sup>51</sup>, not to mention his family and progeny – may Allah be pleased with them.

His saying: “a Ṣalāt which lifts the veil from his noble face in the moments of vision and wakefulness”; in other words, make (this Ṣalāt) for us a means to unveil the cover from his ﷺ unique reality described above. After this, he (may Allah be pleased with him) became apprehensive and afraid that this vision would impede him from that which is even greater, namely, gathering both visions (Divine and Prophetic) and being firmly established in both presences. So he followed up saying: “And cause us to come to recognize You and him in every degree and presence.” It is as if he is saying:

“I ask You, O our Master, that You cause us to know him with a knowledge which does not come in the way of our knowledge of You, and grant us in that a perception of him which does not veil us from perceiving You, so that we fulfill the rights upon us in all degrees (of existence) and presences.”

This is the dearest and loftiest thing which the people attempt to grasp and reach, and this (combining both Divine and Prophetic visions) is none other than the *Straight Path* which is sought after as mentioned in His Words: **“and guide us upon the Straight Path”**<sup>52</sup>. It is the rarest thing in existence, and the most difficult to perceive, because it occurs between two disparate realities, so it effectively becomes a combination of opposites, and **“Allah did not grant to any man to have two hearts within him”**<sup>53</sup>. However, the facilitation of Allah makes the most difficult paths easy to traverse.

Due to this Path being the most delicate and the most demanding in exactitude, and the one traversing it experiencing the most fear and unsettling apprehension, as in his

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<sup>49</sup> This phrase refers to the people of *dhikr* among the true Sufis, and comes from the ḥadīth of Bukhārī and Muslim from Abū Hurayra about the believers who gather together to make collective *dhikr* of Allah, benefiting even those outside them who sit temporarily with them, because “they are such a Folk (*Qawm*) that none who sit with them become wretched”.

<sup>50</sup> Qur’ān 2:253

<sup>51</sup> Allah Most High says: **“He is the One Who sends upon you (believers) His Ṣalat, as do the angels, to bring those who believe out from the darkness into the light, and He is to the believers most merciful”** Qur’ān 33:43.

<sup>52</sup> Qur’ān 1:6

<sup>53</sup> Qur’ān 33:4

ﷺ saying: “I am the closest of you to Allah and the most fearful of Him” <sup>54</sup>, for as closeness increases so does the risk of destruction, the author said – and I say along with him: “And be mercifully gentle (*lutf*) with us, O our Master, by virtue of his sublime rank, in every movement, stillness, moment, and passing thought.”

*Glory to your Lord, the Lord of Might, transcendent above what they attribute to Him, and Peace be upon the messengers, and Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds!*



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<sup>54</sup> Recorded in the Saḥīḥ ḥadīth collections of Bukhārī and Muslim.