

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All Praises to Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

(May Allah (SWT) help us increase our devotional acts in these last few days and nights of Ramadan 1446H so that we can find Lailatul Qadr and earn the good Pleasure of Allah, the ultimate success for a believer. May Allah (SWT) also bless us with many more Ramadans. Ameen.)

27th Taraweeh - Ramadan 1446 Hijri

Summary of Verses 93:1-114:6

(Sura Duha is a Makkan Sura)

Sura Ad-Duha (The Glorious Morning Light) (Verses 93:1-11)

During the early days of revelation, there were long pauses between revelations that filled the Prophet (s.a.w) with anguish and anxiety. His detractors interpreted this as the Creator's displeasure with him. The Sura reassured Muhammad (s.a.w) that Allah had not abandoned him, that, on the contrary, He had elevated him. Although it was addressed specifically to the Prophet to soothe him during a trying time in his life, the Sura soothes anyone overwhelmed by life's challenges. We should recite Sura *Ad-Duha* in the small hours of the morning. Just as the light of dawn floods the earth, so will the ineffable joy of the transcendent flood our hearts. Never despair, for Allah is always with us, the Sura is saying. He will never scorn us nor abandon us to fend for ourselves in a cruel world.

"By the glorious morning light, and by the night when it is still, your Sustainer has not forsaken you, nor is He displeased. And surely the Hereafter will be better for you than the present. And soon your Sustainer will give you what your heart desires and you will be well-pleased. Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? And He found you wandering, and He gave you guidance, and He found you in need and made you independent. Do not, therefore, treat the orphan harshly, nor repulse him

who seeks your help, and speak always of the blessings of your Lord."
(93:1-11)

(Sura Inshirah is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Inshirah (The Expansion) (Verses 94:1-8)

This is considered a continuation of Sura *Ad-Duha*. The two Suras are frequently recited together. The Prophet (s.a.w) was charged with a momentous responsibility that was destined to change the world. He had hardly any support in the beginning when he began preaching the message of Tawhid. This consolation and promise from Allah lifted his spirit and steeled his heart.

"Have we not comforted your heart and lightened your burden which has weighed heavily on your back, and raised high the esteem in which you are held?" (94:1-4)

Allah assures His prophet that *"so, surely, with every hardship comes ease; surely, with every hardship comes ease."* (94:5-6)

Notice that the verse does not say *after* every hardship comes ease, but *with* every hardship comes ease. Solutions to life's difficulties lie within the difficulties themselves. Also, this is the only Sura in the Quran where these two verses (94:5-6) are repeated consecutively, emphasizing their importance. (Compare this with a verse from Sura *At-Talaq* which reads, consistent with its context, *"... After hardship, Allah will bring about ease."* (65:7)

What does it take to be aware of these latent solutions and be comforted? Beautiful patience (*Sabrun Jameel*). Even when the task at hand is completed, there cannot be any discontinuity in the doing of good.

"Therefore, when you are free from your immediate task, still labor hard, and to your Lord turn all your attention." (94:7-8)

(Sura Tin is a Makki Sura)

Sura At-Tin (The Fig) (Verses 95:1-8)

Allah created humankind in the best of physical and spiritual molds. This fact is as real as the fig and the olive trees are real, as real as Mount Sinai, and as real as the holy city of Makkah.

"By the Fig and the Olive, and the Mount of Sinai, and Makkah, the city of peace and security, we have created man in the best of molds." (95:1-4)

But unless man devotes himself to Allah and acts on His message with sincerity and urgency, his faith fades. *"Thereafter, We reduce him to the lowest of the low, except the believers who do good works, and their reward will be everlasting." (95:5-6)*

All humans have a Dr. Jekyll (good) and a Mr. Hyde (bad) in them. While one strives to do the right thing and serve humanity, the other tempts him into committing sins. The Quran asks: *"What then, given this, could make you deny the faith? Is Allah not the best of judges?" (95:7-8)*

(Sura Alaq is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Alaq (The Blood Clot) (Verses 96:1-19)

The first words of Quranic revelation that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) received from Allah during the Night of *Lailatul Qadr* are contained in the first five verses of this Sura: *"Read in the name of your Lord, who created! He created man from a clot of blood. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful, who, by the pen, taught man what he did not know." (96:1-5)*

The first revealed word was "Iqra," which means to read or recite. Note the two keywords "read" and "write." The first revelation stresses the importance of reading and writing, and by extension, of acquiring knowledge. Yet "Iqra" is not included in the five pillars of Islam. So what is the importance of "Iqra" and "Qalam"? Scholars suggest that the first

revealed verse shows how important it is for believers to acquire knowledge to benefit others with good deeds, with the ultimate goal of pleasing Allah.

The Prophet (s.a.w) received revelations to warn people of their arrogant nature and remind them that there is no escaping accountability. *"Indeed, man overreaches himself by thinking that he is self-sufficient. But to your Lord will all things return."* (96:6-8)

The Sura warns disbelievers who prevent believers from praying and enjoining piety and righteousness: *"See you the one who forbids a devotee when he turns to pray? See you if he is on the road of guidance, or enjoins goodness? You see how he denies the truth and turns away from it. Does he not realize that Allah is aware of everything? Let him beware!"* (96:9-15)

To the believer, Allah says, *"Bow down in adoration, and bring yourself closer to Allah!"* (96:19)

(Sura Qadr is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Qadr (Power) (Verses 97:1-5)

This is the only Sura in the Quran dedicated entirely to the importance of a single night, the Night of Power (*Lailatul Qadr*), which makes the Sura unique. (In Sura Jumuah, we are reminded of the importance of the Friday congregational prayer but only the last 3 verses of the Sura (62:9-12) are about the Jumuah prayer.) The first revelation came down on *Lailatul Qadr* to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), during the month of Ramadan when he was engaged in contemplation in a cave called Hira in a mountain called Jabal an-Nour, near Makkah. The revelations continued thereafter for 23 years. (The Sura definitively establishes that the first revelation of the Quran occurred during the night and not during the day. Hence, it is during the night in Ramadan that we have special Taraweeh prayers with longer than usual recitations of the Quran accompanied by intense supplications.)

According to scholars, the Sura opens with reference to the first five verses of Sura al-Alaq. This night is also referred to in Sura *Ad-Dukhan* (44:3-6), a night in which *"the fate and destiny of all creatures are carefully determined by Our command. We send messengers as a blessing from your Lord!"*

The Night of Power, (the word 'Power' suggests that Allah *empowers* us to transform ourselves for the better on this blessed night through focused prayers, recitation of the Quran and heartfelt supplications) is best sought in the last ten nights of Ramadan, for it is in the *seeking* that believers find joy and heightened spirituality. Muslims are exhorted to pray from the heart, with tears and in a confessional mode for past sins, and recite the Quran throughout the night, to receive Allah's mercy and forgiveness. *Lailatul Qadr* is ultimately a matter of the heart. When dawn breaks after a night of intense prayer and supplications, some fortunate believers will experience ineffable spiritual bliss. They are the ones who have found the Night of Power! *"We have indeed revealed this Message in the Night of Power. And what will explain to you what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission with all decrees. Peace, until the appearance of dawn!"* (97:1-5)

Notice the present tense implied by "descend." This Night did not happen just once in the past but comes to us as a gift from Allah every year. And while the angels, freed from their regular duties and responsibilities, come down with decrees ordained by Allah, they are also accompanied by the 'original' and the noblest among them, angel *Jibreel*.

The Night of Power is *better* than a "thousand" months. 1000 months translates to 83 years and 4 months. Common sense dictates that these months do not recursively contain any Night of Power in them. In Arabic, however, "thousand" can imply "innumerable," that is, beyond counting,

suggesting an immense elongation of Time that transcends our sense of earth-bound time. It can also mean that this Night is better than an entire lifetime if the average human lifetime comprises 75 or so years. A single moment of transcendence a believer is lucky to experience in the Night of Power can exceed "thousand" months because that single moment of insight and transcendence can transform a heart into a source of eternal spiritual bliss. Ramadan is a month of values, immeasurable in both quantity and quality. It is up to us to benefit from as many of these values as we can so that we are guided toward bliss and contentment both here and in the Hereafter.

(Aisha (RA) once asked the Prophet (s.a.w) what to recite if one finds *Lailatul Qadr*. The Prophet replied: "Say as often as you can: *Allahumma Innaka 'Afuwwun Tuhibbul Af'wa Fa'fu 'Anni.*" O Allah, surely You are forgiving, You love to forgive, so forgive me.)

(Sura Baiyyina is a Madani Sura)

Sura Al-Baiyyina (The Clear Evidence) (Verses 98:1-98:8)

While those who deny the existence of One True God will suffer the consequences of their disbelief, *"those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures. Their reward is with Allah, gardens of eternity, beneath which rivers flow. They will dwell therein forever, Allah well-pleased with them and they with Him. All this for such as fear their Lord and Cherisher."* (98:7-8)

Notice the merging of the Divine and the human in "Allah well-pleased with them and they with Him." The good pleasure between the Creator and the created is mutual: truly saved and blessed are those whose deeds and aspirations have merged with Allah's commands. The "fear" in "such as fear their Lord" is the fear of invoking His displeasure and is thus akin to awe and love.

(Sura Zilzal is a Madani Sura)

Sura Al-Zilzal (The Convulsion) (Verses 99:1-8)

The Hour of Resurrection will be preceded by an enormous earthquake that will manifest itself in different ways: "*When the earth is shaken to her utmost convulsion, and the earth throws up her burden from within, and man cries, 'what is the matter with her?'*" (99:1-3), the present order of life as we know it will disappear. A new world of truth and justice will replace it. When the day of reckoning arrives, humankind will "*be shown the deeds they had done.*" (99:6)

The doer of good deeds is given this assurance: "*Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good will see it,*" (99:7), while "... *anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil will see it.*" (99:8) It will be up to Allah to forgive or not.

(Sura Adiyat is a Makkan Sura)

Sura Al-Adiyat (Those that Run) (Verses 100:1-11)

The Sura opens with a vivid image: horses panting and jostling against one another, their hooves striking the ground creating sparks of fire, and fearless riders charging forward. For disbelievers trying to defend their false beliefs, such scenes represent the moment of truth when they realize the errors of their ways. Yet the Sura addresses everyone (even the most ardent believer may be tempted by unworthy desires during unguarded moments) when it states: "*Truly man is ungrateful toward his Lord ... and violent is he in his love of wealth.*" (100:6-8)

(Love of wealth can be lethal. We need to ask: Do we obsessively seek wealth and power? Because if we do, we will veer away from life's purpose, which is to worship Allah and to act on His commands to gain His pleasure in a way that benefits humanity.)

On the Day of Judgment, "that which is locked up in human hearts will be made manifest." (100:10) We may have hidden our motives, plans and plots in our earthly lives but all these will be revealed on the Day of Reckoning.

(Sura Qaria is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Qaria (The Day of Clamor) (Verse 101:1-11)

On the Day of Judgment, successful will be those "... *whose balance of good deeds will be heavy. (they) will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction.*" (101:6-7) but those "... *whose balance of good deeds will be light*" (101:7) will suffer severe punishment.

(Sura Takathur is a Makki Sura)

Sura At-Takathur (Piling Up) (Verses 102:1-8)

The Sura is a warning to anyone obsessed with worldly things. This is a person who pays no heed to the Hereafter. Worshiping wealth, power, technology, pleasure, and such, is an insidious form of idol worshiping. On the Day of Judgment, the hoarders and the graspers, the sybarites and the deniers will be questioned about the riches they accumulated and their lack of gratitude to Allah for life's bounties. "*The mutual rivalry for piling up worldly things diverts you from the more serious things until you visit the graves. But you will soon know the reality ... Were you to know with certainty of mind, you would beware! You will certainly see hellfire. Again, you will see it with the eye of certainty! Then you will be questioned on that Day about the pleasure you indulged in!*" (102:1-8)

(Muhammad Asad (1900-1992), the renowned Islamic scholar, described in his incomparable spiritual autobiography, *The Road to Mecca*, how this Sura became the catalyst for his conversion from Judaism to Islam.)

(Sura Asr is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Asr (The Flight of Time) (Verses 103:1-3)

Only the Quran can capture in three verses the essence of eternity, the fallibility of human beings, and their redemption: *"By the flight of time, surely man is in loss, except for those who have faith and do good works, who exhort each other to truth and who exhort each other to patience."* (103:1-3)

There is no doctrine of original sin in Islam, no concept of innate and inherent sinfulness that makes humans unworthy of salvation. Instead, the Quran affirms that humankind is in a state of loss, forgetfulness, and heedlessness, and is, therefore, in constant need of reminders. The loss can be overcome in four ways: 1) Iman or faith, which must translate to engaging in just and noble actions 2) Doing good deeds 3) Encouraging and counseling each other to uphold the truth and 4) Encouraging and counseling each other to patience, particularly in adversity.

(It is important to realize that while we are enmeshed in time and submit to its relentless unfolding, all things are eternally present to our Creator who exists outside of time.)

The name of the Sura is "The Flight of Time." It points to the importance of the proper use of time in our lives instead of squandering it in useless or frivolous pursuits. In this age of social media in which the young and the old alike spend hours daily on their smartphones and laptops, the sheer amount of time lost is mind-boggling. The Prophet (s.a.w) said, "There are two blessings which many people waste: health and free time." The Islamic tradition encourages us to be morning people rather than night people. One way to achieve this is for us to go to sleep after offering the Isha prayer so that we can get up early to offer the Fajr prayer on time. (It is the Fajr prayer, more than any other prayer, that many of us fail to offer on time.) Indeed, the Islamic tradition affirms the idea of "early to bed and early to rise," which can not only make us healthy, wealthy (not just in the narrow

sense of material wealth) and wise but more importantly, instill in us a lifelong appreciation of the value of time.

(What *is* time? It is important to reflect on time because there are 75 references to it in the Quran. We talk of the "arrow of time" in which time moves relentlessly forward, never back. This time that we experience is linear and irreversible, like entropy (disorder) in a physical system that always increases but never decreases. Time is relative and can dilate (expand) as Einstein showed in his Special Theory of Relativity: A moving clock ticks more slowly than a clock at rest. The fabric of the Cosmos consists of space-time in which is encoded in the texture of reality. This is physical time, a time not just of duration but of motion, transition and change. But we also experience time in cycles in which nature's rhythms manifest in countless, reversible ways. Day follows night, seasons follow one another, the moon waxes and wanes, tide ebbs and flows, birds migrate and return, salmon swim upstream to spawn and die to begin their generational life cycle anew. We too are tuned to our circadian rhythms when we awaken, eat and sleep at regular intervals. There is the generational cycle of life where every beginning has an end, and every end has a beginning. "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in," wrote Thoreau, the original American naturalist. To fish in the river of time, even without catching anything, is time well spent, for it leads to reflection and reverie, the gateway to spirituality. Mind time and clock time are two different entities that flow at varying rates. There are subjective and emotional times, the time of memory, loss and love, the recursive time that contains other times, as T.S. Eliot observed: "Time present and time past/Are both perhaps present in time future/And time future contained in time past." Then there is spiritual time that transcends physical time, redolent in the story of the Companions of the Cave (The Sleepers) in Sura *Kahf*. The time inside the cave is different

from time outside, the chronology more metaphysical than physical. The Sleepers stepped out of the stream of time and then stepped back into it, touching infinity while being bounded by the finite. As much as the nature of time can engage our senses and intellect, what the profoundly powerful Sura *Asr* tells us is that the best way to honor time is to focus on how we spend it, for how we spend our time is how we spend our life. And what is the best way to spend time? By doing good deeds, by encouraging one another to the Truth, and by motivating one another to patience. Notice how the reference to Truth is followed by a reference to patience. It is as if the two are entwined, just as space and time are entwined to form the fabric of the Cosmos. We should also note what the science of psychology teaches us, that prioritizing time over money - that is, preferring time affluence to wealth affluence - leads to greater happiness.)

(Food for thought: Sura *Asr* (103) appears between Sura *Takathur* (102) and Sura *Humaza* (104). *Takathur* talks about mutual rivalry in piling up wealth while *Humaza* talks about scandalmongers who pile up wealth. The positioning of Sura *Asr* between these two Suras is instructive. While in Sura *Asr*, the exhortation is for truth and patience, in Sura *Balad* (90:17) there is also the exhortation for enjoining kindness and compassion. Practicing these virtues - truth, patience, kindness and compassion - will surely raise our status in the sight of Allah.)

(Sura *Humaza* is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Humaza (The Slanderer) (Verses 104:1-9)

The sins of the tongue are probably the easiest of sins to fall into, making them that much deadlier for families, communities, and societies in general. Scandal mongering (talking or suggesting evil of women or men by word, innuendo, sarcasm, mockery, insult), and backbiting (detracting from someone's character behind her or his back, even if what is being said is

true) are sins that a believer must always avoid. The miser who hoards wealth in the mistaken belief that it will save him from hellfire is delusional. *"Woe to every scandal monger and backbiter, who piles up wealth and hoards it, thinking that his wealth will make him last forever! By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks to pieces. And what will explain to you what breaks to pieces? It is a blazing fire ..."* (104:1-6)

(Sura Fil is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Fil (The Elephant) (Verses: 105:1-5)

Pride and power can be undone in an instant by Allah's command. That is what happened to Abraha, ruler of Abyssinia, who invaded Makkah with his army and some elephants in the year of the Prophet's (s.a.w) birth, intending to destroy the Ka'ba. Then a miracle happened. A flock of birds rained down stones on the invading army and annihilated it. *"Do you see how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And he sent against them a flock of birds, striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field ..."* (105:1-5)

(Sura Quraish is a Makki Sura)

Sura Quraish (Verses 106:1-4)

More than any other tribe in Arabia, it was the Quraish who were expected to be grateful to the Creator for the bounty He provided them. They were the custodian of Makkah, the hub of commerce, and owners of the caravans of trade which brought them immense profit throughout the year. Yet they continued their arrogant and idol-worshipping ways. They are reminded of the gratitude they owe their Creator: *"Let them worship the Lord of this House, who provided them with food against hunger, and with security against danger."* (106:3-4)

(Sura Ma'un is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Ma'un (Neighborly Needs) (Verses 107:1-7)

Faith is not a mere declaration of belief but also acting on the noble impulses it inspires. Sometimes it is more important to identify what negates faith than what promotes it. So, who are the arrogant, selfish ones who may exhibit outward aspects of faith but are among the lost? *"... such is the one who repulses the orphan and does not encourage the feeding of the indigent. So, woe to the worshipers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who only want to be seen by people, and who even refuse to supply neighborly needs."* (107:2-7)

(Notice the importance Islam places on neighbors, irrespective of race or religion. The Prophet (s.a.w) said: "By Allah, he is not a believer whose neighbor does not feel safe from him." He also said: "He is not a believer whose stomach is full while his neighbor goes hungry." According to a hadith, neighbors are "forty houses in front, forty houses behind, forty houses to the right and forty houses to the left." In the middle of affluent Silicon Valley, there are thousands of homeless people. There are pockets of poverty in prosperous regions of America where residents barely get a square meal a day. While many Muslim charities in America regularly feed the hungry and the homeless, we, as individuals, should also be proactive in ensuring that our neighbors take comfort from our presence in their midst and that they can count on our help when they need it. When a Muslim passes away, friends and neighbors typically cook food for the family of the deceased. We should extend this practice to all our neighbors irrespective of their faith or lack of faith.)

(Sura Kauthar is a Makki Sura)

Sura Kauthar (Abundance) (108:1-3)

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) had seven children, 3 boys and 4 girls (although

some reports say 2 boys and 4 girls). Usually, it is the children who bury their parents but in the Prophet's case, he buried six of them, including sons Qasim and Abdullah who died in their infancy. Only Fatima (RA) survived him, but she too passed away six months after his death. Allah addresses this short Sura directly to His Prophet to console him on the death of his children and to assure him that the pagans who taunted him and vented their venom against him were the real losers. The message, however, is timeless and consoles anyone who has suffered incalculable losses from diseases, accidents, natural calamities and other tragedies. *"To you, We have granted the fountain of abundance. Therefore, to your Lord turn in prayer and sacrifice. For he who hates you, he will be cut off from any hope."* (108:1-3)

(Sura Kafirun is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Kafirun (The Unbelievers) (Verses 109:1-6)

The Quran is clear on the coexistence of different religions: No use of force can ever be justified to compel people to embrace a religion, including Islam. There should be mutual respect and constructive dialogue between people of different faiths. We simply need to live with any disagreement between different faiths. Resorting to violence to settle differences in faiths is forbidden in Islam. *"Say, O you who reject faith, I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship, and I will not worship that which you worship, nor will you worship which I worship. To you, your religion, and to me, mine."* (109:2-6)

(Sura Nasr is a Madani Sura)

Sura An-Nasr (Help) (Verses 110:1-3)

This Sura, the last complete Sura to be revealed chronologically, was understood by the Prophet's companions as a sign of his impending departure from the earth. Scholars suggest that it was revealed during one

of the three days following Eid-ul-Adha, the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah in 10 Hijri. That's when the Prophet (s.a.w) performed his one and only Hajj in which, on the Day of Arafat, the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah, he delivered his profound and comprehensive Last Sermon. He witnessed on the plains of Arafat the multitudes of people who had embraced Islam following the various victories Allah gave him and his followers in previous years, particularly the bloodless conquest of Makkah two years after the Treaty of Hudaibiya (6 Hijri) was violated by the Quraish. While the context is compelling, the message is timeless. We should be humble before Allah in victory, acknowledge our frailties, bear setbacks with patience, and attribute our successes to Him. We fulfill our destiny when we choose humility over self-glory, service over power, and Allah's Grace and Mercy over self-sufficiency. *"When comes the help of Allah, and victory, and you see people enter Allah's religion in droves, celebrate the praises of your Lord, and pray for His forgiveness, for He is the one Who repeatedly forgives."* (110:1-3)

(Sura Masad is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Masad (The Flame) (Verses 111:1-5)

Abu Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet (s.a.w), was one of his fiercest enemies, as was Abu Lahab's wife. Both were given ample opportunities to reconsider their positions, but both remained bitter enemies of Islam to the end. The Sura predicts their end: *"Perish the hands of the father of flame, perish he. No profit to him from his wealth and his gains. Burnt soon will he be in a fire of blazing flame! His wife shall carry the crackling wood as fuel, a twisted rope of fiber around her neck."* (111:1-5) "Perish" in this case implies that in the Sight of Allah, Abu Lahab was the ultimate failure despite his wealth and influence.

(Sura Ikhlas is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Ikhlas (Purity of Faith) (Verses 112:1-112:4)

The principle of Tawhid is the soul of Islam: God is One. This Sura, considered to be equivalent to 'one-third' of the Quran, gives a concise definition of Islam: *"Say, He is Allah, the One. Allah, the eternal, absolute. He begets not, neither is He begotten. And No one is equal to Him."* (112:1-4)

(Sura Falaq is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Falaq (The Daybreak) (Verses 113:1-5)

This, and the following Sura, asks us to seek refuge in Allah from all kinds of fear and superstition, both external and internal. External dangers are the focus of this Sura: *"Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak, from the mischief of created things, from the mischief of the darkness as it overspread, from the mischief of those who blow on knots, and from the mischief of the envious one as he practices envy."* (113:1-5)

(Sura Nas is a Makki Sura)

Sura An-Nas (Mankind) (Verses 114:1-6): The last Sura of the Quran asks us to trust in Allah as our One and Only Protector, especially against the whispers of evil within our own hearts. *"Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the mischief of the whisperer of evil, who withdraws after his whisper, who whispers into the hearts of mankind."* (114:1-6)

(The last two Suras of the Quran (113 and 114) are sometimes referred to as "Verses of Refuge" or "*Al-Mu'awwidhatayn*," because both begin with "Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of ...". Anytime we feel frightened, stressed, or threatened by any situation or circumstance, we can seek Allah's protection by reciting *Ayatul Qursi* (2:255), Sura *Ikhlas* (112:1-4), Sura *Falaq* (113:1-5) and Sura *Nas* (114:1-6). It is also a good practice to recite these 16 verses at the beginning and end of each day.)

Epilogue: Ramadan is the month of reflection on the meaning and purpose of life. May Allah (SWT) help us gain His good pleasure by obeying His commands and serving His Creation to the best of our abilities. In striving to fulfill our obligations in this sacred month, we ask Allah (SWT) to bless us for the good we have done and forgive the mistakes we have made. We are imperfect human beings who make mistakes, and we ask Allah to help us learn from them so we do not repeat them. We plead with Allah (SWT) to infuse our prayers with humility, serenity and grace. We pray to Allah (SWT) to keep us in good health and to protect us from the viruses of materialism, avarice, apathy, and arrogance. We pray to Him to turn our homes into abodes of tranquility, to help us continue doing good deeds and shunning the bad for the rest of the year until next Ramadan, to be grateful for all the deserved and undeserved blessings in our lives, and above all, to seek His pleasure, and His pleasure alone, in everything we do. May Allah (SWT) bless us to witness many more Ramadans and may He keep us and our families on the Straight Path. Ameen.

- Hasan Zillur Rahim

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