

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

Neither drowsiness befalls Him nor sleep

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Sinah (drowsiness/slumber) is the initial sense of falling asleep that first appears in one's eyes until it becomes deeper and reaches the mind when it can be called *nawm* (sleep).

Nawm (sleep) is the inert condition in which consciousness is suppressed.

Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep is a statement to help man realize the fallacy of attempting to understand God in human terms.

All the verses of the Qur'an warn us against falling into the trap of anthropomorphism about God.

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

One may question the eloquence and order of the words in this verse.

Usually, in an affirmative statement the weaker point is mentioned first and then the stronger one. For example, we say, 'He can carry a load of fifty kilograms, even a hundred.' But in a negative sentence the sequence is reversed; it goes from a stronger to a weaker point. For example, we say, 'He cannot carry a load of a hundred kilograms, let alone fifty.' We do not say, 'He cannot carry a load of a fifty kilograms, even a hundred.'

Coming back to the verse, since the sentence here is in the negative, it should have read, 'sleep does not overtake Him nor slumber.'

لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

But the rule does not apply here.

Here, since sleep is more contrary to the attribute of *qayyum* than slumber, the eloquence demands that first slumber be denied and thereafter the stronger point, sleep, be negated.

So it is as if the statement is saying, 'He does not even doze off or slumber, let alone sleep!'

The whole creation would fall apart if He takes away His attention even for one second.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

*To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and
whatever is on the earth.*

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth.

He is the absolute and only true owner of all that exists.

His ownership is *real* ownership as against the *conventional* ownership.

Real ownership: that which is owned has no independent existence without the owner

Conventional ownership: that which is owned has independent existence.

As such *To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth* infuses the heart of the faithful with absolute reliance on God and brings a realization that all are subservient to Him and come to Him as paupers (2:116, 35:15).

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

Such a person has also no reason to hoard, usurp, oppress, colonize or transgress the rights of others. He sees himself as only a temporary custodian of all that he possesses and it becomes meaningless to be stingy, greedy, selfish or even fearful and anxious of one's future.

This type of ownership includes sovereignty as well. He is *the* مالک and *the* ملك .

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكِ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say, "O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things" (3:26).

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

The creator is the real owner and all other ownerships are convention.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ

Have they not seen that We have created for them of what Our hands have worked cattle, so they have become their masters? (36:71)

As Imam Ali (a) has explained:

فَهُوَ الْمَالِكُ لِمَا مَلَكَكَ وَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَى مَا عَلَيْهِ أَقْدَرَكَ

He owns whatever He has made you possess, and He has power over what He has empowered you for. (*Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 213)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

*Who is it that may intercede with Him except with
His permission?*

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The system of intercession runs in the nature as it runs in sentient interactions.

Although 'who' (مَنْ) is used in the verse, which is used for sentient beings, but intercession with God is a universal phenomenon. Every cause intercedes with God for its effect.

Nothing works on its own accord and its own power in the creation.

On realizing this truth, one might wonder about the system of causality in the world.

What is the significance of the chain of causes and effects?

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Were the Ash'arite scholars like Ghazali right in negating causality?

The answer is in this verse.

All causes are intermediaries. They just 'intercede' by bringing about things -their effects, with the leave of God.

The angels are intercessors who bring blessings to the world.

The sun intercedes to bring the bounties of God on earth.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Shafa'ah (intercession) is therefore the act of an intermediary bringing about a good or averting an evil.

Such an intercessor has some influence on the affairs of the thing for which he intercedes but this influence is not arbitrary and independent, for that would be contrary to the complete authority and total sovereignty of God.

Their influence is only by God's will.

In fact, it is also God's will to bring things into existence and occurrence through intermediaries.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

God has set in place an order so that all things have a cause and all matters occur only by cause-an-effect.

Ultimately, there is no authority except that of God and He is the only up-keeper (*al-qayyum*) of all matters.

That is why the Quran at times attribute events to Allah directly, and sometimes interchanges their attribution to their causes and to God to emphasize that the ultimate power rests in Him.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Examples of the former are:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَّامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلالِهِ

Have you not regarded that Allah drives the clouds, then He composes them, then He piles them up, whereat you see the rain issuing from its midst? (24:43)

رَبُّكُمْ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَنْتَبَهُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

Your Lord is He who drives for you the ships in the sea, that you may seek His grace. Indeed He is most merciful to you (17:66).

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Example of the latter is:

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَيِّتٍ فَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ

It is Allah who sends the winds and they raise a cloud; then We drive it toward a dead land and with it revive the earth after its death. Likewise will be the resurrection[of the dead (35:9).

So the meaning of *Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission* is that none can intercede for others before God except those that He permits.

But it clearly also alludes to the fact that there exist intercessors with His permission.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ

*He knows that which is before them and that which
is behind them,*

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ

He knows that which is before them and that which is behind them

Their future and the past, and their present and whatever can be imagined of them in the expanse of time and space and beyond is known to Him.

وَمَا نُنزِّلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَ مَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا

We do not descend except by the command of your Lord. To Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that, and your Lord is not forgetful (19:64).

What others claim to know of knowledge, is nothing but ignorance in relation to God's knowledge and omniscience.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

*And they do not comprehend anything of His
knowledge except what He wishes*

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And they do not comprehend anything of His knowledge except what He wishes

He is the only one who knows and they do not comprehend anything of His knowledge except what He wishes.

Except what He wishes clarifies that knowledge is not independent of God.

Hence, the management of all affairs is in the hands of God only.

So far as the intermediary causes are concerned, especially those with life and intellect, their effectiveness and their knowledge is derived from His knowledge.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

Thus none of them can proceed against the will and decree of God in any way since they only know as much as He wishes them to know.

Life, power, and knowledge are His only, and He give anyone as much as He wishes

A beautiful point about the superb eloquence of the verse is that the word knowledge (*ilm*) in the preceding sentence [*He knows...*] changes to the word comprehension (*ihatah*) [*they do not comprehend...*] in this sentence.

It highlights that they have no knowledge at all and do not 'know' anything. They can only 'encompass' and draw out from what He knows and His knowledge to the degree that He allows.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

But they do not comprehend any of His knowledge may also refer to the knowledge of and about God Himself, of His essence and attributes.

No one can know anything about Him except what He discloses as His names.

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَ رَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ مَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَ لَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ
عِلْمًا

Intercession will not avail that day except from him whom the All-beneficent allows and approves of his word. He knows that which is before them and that which is behind them, but they cannot comprehend Him in their knowledge. (20:110).