

Gratitude in Holy Qur'an

(A Case Study for Muslims)

Introduction:

Very few people openly express and thank Almighty God, for blessing them with favours. Fewer others would also express their gratitude, provided somebody prompts them. Whereas, there are many others, who have also been blessed with favours; whether or not prompted to thank Almighty God, they will not thank and remain most ungrateful. These scenarios have also been seen in many countries, where the Governments do so much for the communities, yet there are some people who will not express gratitude but rather criticise everything. The Holy Qur'an has several verses, some of which indicate case studies of people, whether or not they showed their gratitude. These case studies as verses have been quoted below within the texts as appropriate.

Discussions on Gratitude in Holy Qur'an:

- 1) According to Islam, in the Holy Qur'an, the supremacy of mankind's gratitude must always be solely towards Almighty God¹ at the highest level. In the Muslims' scripture, the Holy Qur'an, Almighty God addresses mankind directly in His First Person and then He reminds mankind, that He as Almighty God is responsible to make mankind eminent. This decree is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:152** *"Therefore glorify Me, I will make you eminent, and give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me."*
- 2) Therefore, mankind in this universe should be thankful to Almighty God and to demonstrate their gratitude directly to Almighty God only. As a case study, Almighty God used the life history of Prophet Moses², from the time when Moses was an infant; he was placed in a secured basket and given to drift down the River Nile; till the time when he was found by the family of the Pharaoh and became a member of the Pharaoh's household. This case study continued till he became Prophet Moses.
- 3) Thereafter upon divine directives, and divine assistance, Prophet Moses then became the first leader of the Israelites whilst in Egypt; then successfully conducted the exodus of Israelites out of Egypt. The circumstances in Egypt were such that the Israelites would have been decimated regardless. This is stated in the Holy Quran at **HQ2:243** *"Have*

¹ There is to be no other consideration of whatsoever description, such as variations to idolatry, polytheism, superstition, astrology and witchcraft, etc. This is called *Shirk* and forbidden to Muslims.

² The personal name of Prophet Moses has been mentioned throughout in the Holy Qur'an 140 times.

you not considered those who went forth from their homes, and they were thousands, for fear of death. Then Allah said to them, Die³. Then He gave them life.⁴ Surely Allah is gracious to people, but most people are not grateful.”

- 4) The Pharaoh, who considered himself as a god, neither understood the almightiness of Almighty God nor His abundance of mercy in helping out the Israelites. The Holy Qur’an states at **HQ6:63** *“Say: Who is it that delivers you from the calamities of the land and the sea? (When) you call upon Him, in humility and in secret: If He deliver us from this, we will certainly be of the grateful ones.”*
- 5) The Israelites crossed the Red Sea⁵, went over to the Arabian Peninsula, and Prophet Moses finally led the Israelites towards the Promised Land⁶. This historic event is narrated in the Holy Qur’an, in the verses at **HQ7:144** *“He said: O Moses, surely I have chosen you above the people by My*

³ During several decades of the Israelites’ population growing exponentially in Egypt, the Israelites were no longer following the Faith of their ancestor Prophet Abraham as believers in One God as the Almighty (Muslim), but had drifted off into idolatry, polytheism, superstition, astrology and witchcraft, etc. The Pharaoh had declared himself as god of the Egyptians and this was imposed on the Israelites.

⁴ Life is taken to mean the successful exodus of Israelites out of bondage from Egypt.

⁵ Historical evidence and relics found conclude that they did not cross the main Red Sea but the right-hand side uppermost division, which is now called the Gulf of Aqaba, at a place called Nuweiba. The main Red Sea has maximum depth of 9,970 feet, average width of 220 miles and top to bottom length of 1,400 miles. This place called Nuweiba, facilitated them to cross over from Sinai Peninsula to the Arabian Peninsula. Rabbinical literature records indicate an extrapolated 3.5 million Israelites of all mixed age groups from infants to able-bodied people, mothers and people of advanced ages participated in the exodus and crossed the Red Sea at Nuweiba from Sinai Peninsula to Midian in Arabia. At this stage they were the original Israelites, who lived in Egypt as direct descendants of the Twelve Tribes, as pioneering twelve sons of Jacob, son of Isaac and so grandson to Prophet Abraham.

⁶ When Prophet Moses led his Israelites to the region designated as the Promised Land, the Israelites refused to enter, fearing the inhabitants who were already there. The Israelites protested and sat down, not moving any further. This historical event is stated in the Holy Qur’an, explaining how and why those exodus of Israelites missed out in settling in the Promised Land. Almighty God reprimanded them and sanctioned that they shall not enter the Promised Land but left to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. The period of 40 years was necessary for the original Israelites who left Egypt to be replaced by new generations of Israelites. This whole narrative is stated in the Holy Quran at **HQ5:20-26** *“And when Moses said to his people: My people, remember the favour of Allah to you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He did not give to any other of the nations. My people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you and do not turn your backs, for then you will turn back losers. They said: Moses, in it are a powerful people, and we shall not enter it until they go out from it; if they go out from it, then surely we will enter. Two men of those who feared, on whom Allah had bestowed a favour, said: Enter upon them by the gate, for when you enter it you will surely be victorious; and put your trust in Allah, if you are believers. They said: Moses, we will never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore you and your Lord, and fight; surely here we sit. He said: My Lord, I have control of none but my own self and my brother; so distinguish between us and the transgressing people. He said: It will surely be forbidden to them for forty years — they will wander about in the land. So do not grieve for the transgressing people.”*

messages and My words. So take hold of what I give you⁷ and be of the grateful ones.” Along the way, Prophet Moses reminded the Israelites to remember and show their gratitude, that Almighty God had most magnificently mastered the situation of the exodus and saved slaughtering of Hebrew male babies by Egyptians.

- 6) This whole narrative is stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ14:5-8** *“And certainly We sent Moses with Our messages, saying: Bring forth your people from darkness into light and remind them of the days of Allah. In this are surely signs for every steadfast, grateful one. And when Moses said to his people: Call to mind Allah’s favour to you, when He delivered you from Pharaoh’s people, who subjected you to severe torment, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women. And there was a great trial in it from your Lord. And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I will give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My punishment is truly severe. And Moses said: If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then Allah is surely Self-sufficient, Praised.”*
- 7) The scriptures report that Egyptians were using Hebrew females as slaves and also using them for immoral practises. Prophet Moses questioned the Israelites that if they were practising their gratitude to Almighty God truthfully, then Almighty God will give them more of His benefits. If however, they do not show their gratitude, then Almighty God knows best what to do with them.
- 8) Prophet Moses said that whenever people are in distress, they must bow only to Almighty God and after Almighty God had delivered them from danger, some people did not show their gratitude to Him. These aspects are collectively stated in the Holy Qur’an at **HQ31:31-32** *“Do you not see that the ships glide on the sea by Allah’s grace, that He may show you of His signs? Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one. And when a wave like awnings covers them, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. But when He brings them safe to land, some of them follow the middle course. And none denies Our signs but every perfidious, ungrateful one.”*

⁷ “Take hold” refers to the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, which the Israelites carried with them inside an ark for the next 40 years. The sole intention of the Ten Commandments were the complete code of life for humanity. That reprimand of wandering in the wilderness for 40 years was because of the Israelites’ refusal to express their gratitude to Almighty God for all He had done for them, from the time of their exodus out of Egypt till they were delivered to the Promised Land: then they refused to enter the Promised Land, protested and sat outside the boundaries, and asking Prophet Moses to enter first and personally fight the (already) inhabitants of the Promised Land. None of those original Israelites which left Egypt in exodus would be entering the Promised Land but they would be phased out as attrition over 40 years. The new generation would become the beneficiaries.

- 9) The next lower or at mid-level of gratitude is of mankind to others within the communities of mankind. In the Holy Qur'an, Almighty God reminds mankind to show and practise their gratitude towards their parents and reminds mankind of the difficulties their mothers endured in delivering them at birth as babies. The Holy Qur'an states that in showing gratitude to parents, mankind must treat their parents with utmost kindness and respect; this is their true gratitude. The Holy Qur'an stipulates these points in unequalled brilliance at two verses as **HQ31:14** *"And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents — his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years — saying: Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the eventual coming."* **HQ46:15** *"And We have enjoined on man the doing of good to his parents. His mother bears him with trouble and she gives birth to him in pain. And the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months. Till, when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says: My Lord, grant me that I may give thanks for Your favour, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases You; and be good to me in respect of my offspring. Truly I turn to You, and truly I am among those who submit."*
- 10) Further, Almighty God states that He provided days for working and nights for resting and mankind must show their utmost gratitude to Almighty God as the Beneficent and the Merciful. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ28:73** *"And out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest in it, and that you may seek of His grace (in the day), and that you may give thanks."*
- 11) In third level of gratitude, mankind is reminded in the Holy Qur'an to show their gratitude towards animals and other creatures, which Almighty God has beneficially provided to service mankind. This covers birds of the air, animals of the land and marine life in the oceans and rivers. Almighty God states in the Holy Qur'an that He not only provided animals as assists to mankind in carrying burden but mankind should also use them for food⁸.

⁸ Elephants, donkeys, horses, camels and similar beasts are animals as assists for carrying burden. They are not for food for mankind. Cattle, sheep and goats are animals in the main as provisions for food for people and not for carrying burden. Lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, etc. as predators, are animals designated as prefects of the jungle, to keep the grass eating animal population at sustainable level by hunting them down as their food. This allows having sufficient grass as their feed sources at ground level. Taller animals like elephants and giraffes reach out to tree tops for food. Apes and monkeys also reach out to tree tops for fruits as their food. In the same token Almighty God created different types of pigs (for hot countries and cold countries) not as food for humans, but as natural processors of household waste and garbage. To this day, pigs eat garbage and waste in those parts of the world, which do not have Municipal garbage collection vehicles. Pigs scavenge and eat garbage, which they

- 12) The comprehensive utility features of the Holy Qur'an as humanity's handbook of life is demonstrated in the following verse at **HQ6:141-142** *"And He it is Who produces gardens, trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates like and unlike. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not be extravagant. Surely He does not love the extravagant; and of the cattle (He has created) some for burden and some for slaughter. Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy."*
- 13) Mankind can be grateful sometimes; and most ungrateful some other times. Almighty God provides all resources without any asking; but sometimes mankind accepts events happening around, without due consideration of any gratitude. The Holy Qur'an states subtle reminder at **HQ14:34** *"And He gives you of all that you ask of Him. And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful."*
- 14) At other times mankind continues to enjoy favours from Almighty God without gratefulness. These are times when Muslims must always express their appreciation in their prayers five times daily. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at the following two verses at **HQ16:83** *"They recognize the favour of Allah, yet they deny it, and most of them are ungrateful."* **HQ22:38** *"Surely Allah defends those who believe. Surely Allah does not love anyone who is unfaithful, ungrateful."*
- 15) Muslims are reminded of their expected level fairness. They must believe and serve only Almighty God at all times; not only when in distress. They must not circumstantially switch sides to idolatry, polytheism, superstition and astrology when not in distress. The Holy Qur'an gives this subtle warning at **HQ39:8** *"And when distress afflicts a man he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him; then when He grants him a favour from Him, he forgets that for which he called upon Him before, and sets up rivals to Allah that he may cause (others) to stray from His path. Say: Enjoy your ungratefulness for a little, surely you are among the companions of the Fire."* As Muslims, gratitude to Almighty God must be on agenda at each prayer, five times daily.

digest rapidly in just 4 hours from eating to excretion as pig dung; compared to cows which take 24 hours from eating grass to cow dung. Hence pigs have been forbidden for eating by humans in Scriptures, because of their closeness to eating filth and pig body tissue with 31 diseases, which are transferrable to humans. Ruthless killing of predator animals for their skins and body parts are most insensible and gross ingratitude to Almighty God. All these various classifications are also different dimensions of gratitude to Almighty God, which fewer people appreciate and then express as their gratitude. Sincere admiration of all natural events happening is expression of gratitude to Almighty.

Conclusions on Gratitude:

- a) Addressees should impart this information to those others, who may need to understand the superlative beneficences of Almighty God, from scriptural perspectives, and then indeed practise their gratitude to Almighty God daily.
- b) Mankind needs to keep abreast of all types of events around themselves, as they all reveal the incomparable and superlative excellences of Almighty God the Beneficent, with each new discovery, and so to express their gratitude to Almighty God.
- c) Men and women are constantly tested in their expressions of gratitude.

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