

*Understanding the Presence of Allah
Within Us
(Opening the Discussion)*



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surely all praise is due to Allah the Lord, Evolver, Maintainer of all that exists. He sent the Book down with His servant Jibreel (as) onto the heart of His servant and messenger, Muhammad and He is The Exalted, The Powerful. We glorify Him with praise and we seek forgiveness from Him. We ask him for all good and we seek refuge with Him from every evil. There is none to be worshipped except Him. Then, we bear witness that there is no god except Allah and we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

About the Quran

الرَّحْمَنُ
عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ
عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

The Merciful One, He taught and teaches the Recitation. He created the human one. He teaches him / her means of clear expression. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 55: ayaat 1 – 4)

Allah, al-‘Azeez, al-‘Aleem, opens this Surah with His own exalted Reality and states aspects of His unlimited power and grace to the creation. A key and central aspect of this grace is knowledge, which He has given to all beings. Yet, there is a special knowledge given to His human creation which includes eloquent and understandable manners of expressing what one has come to understand.

The recurring ayah that appears throughout this Surah

فَبِأَيِّ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمُ تُكَذِّبُونَ

Then, which of the favors of your Lord do you deny? (interpreted meaning)

begins at ayah 13, and each time it is stated indicates that all that has been stated previously is part of the آلاء (alaa’u), the goodness, the favors, the gifts, the bounties of Allah. These includes the Quran, our ability to know, our speech and our very existence. The question being in dual form is being addressed to both humans and jinn, whose presence is not clearly indicated until ayah 31.

سَنَفِرُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهُ الثَّقَلَانِ ﴿٣١﴾

“Soon will we attend to you, oh you two heavy beings.” (interpreted meaning)

Commentaries:

The Study Quran: *That the verb for ‘taught’ comes directly after the Divine Name ^{منال} indicates that teaching revelation is intrinsic to God’s compassionate nature. From one perspective, revelation is a blessing through which God sustains creation. Throughout the Quran teaching is presented as one of God’s essential functions in relation to human beings, for human beings are created for knowledge and God teaches Adam and, thus, all of humanity (Surah 2: 30) before commanding, providing laws and judging.*

The creation of human beings directly upon the mention of God’s teaching (of) the Quran indicates that human beings were made to know revelation even before their creation in this world. (Pause here and reflect on why the Quran is called ^{ذِكْرًا} (a Reminder)

Ayah 4: Just as human beings are distinguished by their ability to know revelation, so too are they distinguished from all other creatures by the faculty of speech through which they both articulate and comprehend. This is also an allusion to God’s honoring human beings by making the Quran, His very Word, something they are capable of learning and reciting.

The entire Surah serves as an education into the reality of Ar Rahmaan, which the Quraish and others questioned and / or denied - Surah 25: 60 and what follows:

كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لَتَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِي
أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿٣٠﴾

In that manner We sent you into a community, before which other communities had ceased to exist, so that you would recite to them what We have revealed to you. And, they deny (the reality) of The Merciful. One. Say, ‘He is my Sustainer; there is no god except Him. I depend upon Him and to Him I turn. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 13: ayah 30)

Here in Surah 55, as well as in Surah 2: ayah 31 (and in other places) Allah makes sure we know He is the Master Teacher and He says His knowledge encompasses everything.

وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمَهُ، قَالَ أَتُحْجِّجُونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِي وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا
تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

And his (Prophet Ibraheem) people disputed with him. He said, “Are you disputing with me about Allah and, surely, He has guided me. And I don’t fear anything of what you associate with Him, unless My Lord wills it. My Guardian Lord encompasses everything in knowledge. Will you not then be admonished?” (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 6: ayah 80)

Allah teaches and His knowledge encompasses everything. Therefore, we are able to gain Divine knowledge from all that exists. Without saying, we must have permission from Allah and be in a condition of a student – humble and hungry.

Understanding the Presence of Allah in Us – Allah is Closer Than ...

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ
جَبَلِ الْوَرِيدِ

And, certainly, We created the human being and We know what his / her soul whispers to him / her. And, We are closer to him / her than the vessel, the one that enters and branches out.

(interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 50: ayah 16)

This unusual interpretation is my own, but I am not alone in this understanding. Many Muslim scientists and scholars and common Arabic speakers agree that the Arabic used here does not refer to a vein. It is quite a conundrum, then, as to why major English interpretations commonly use the term “*jugular vein*”. This is the case with Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Mohsen Khan, The Study Quran, the translation of Ibn Katheer, Marmaduke Pickthall, etc. Muhammad Asad chose the term “*neck vein*” and Shakir uses the term “*life vein*”. Yet, this is NOT a vein. However, before discussing the reality of these two words, let’s look at the Tafseer of the ayah.

Commentaries

Ibn Katheer: *Allah, the Exalted, affirms His absolute dominance over mankind, being their Creator and the Knower of everything about them. Allah, the Exalted, has complete knowledge of all thoughts that cross the mind of man, be they good or evil. Allah says in the case of dying persons*

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا بُدُّ مِنْ أَنْ يَرَىٰ
أَعْيُنًا

And We are closer to him / her than you, but you just don’t see. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Sura 56: ayah 85)

Thus, the Angels are closer to man than his own jugular vein, by the power and leave of Allah. Consequently, the Angel touches mankind, just as the devil touches them for the devil is as close to them as blood that runs in their veins.

Commentaries

Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *God created man and gave him limited free will. God knows the inmost desires and motives of man even better than man does himself. He is nearer to man than man’s own jugular vein. The jugular vein is the big trunk vein, one on each side of the neck, that brings the blood back from the head to the heart. The two jugular veins correspond to the two ceratoid arteries, which carry the blood from the heart to the head. As the blood stream is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase ‘nearer than the jugular vein implies that God knows more truly the innermost state of our feeling and consciousness than does our own ego.*

The Study Quran: *Most take this to refer to God’s knowledge of what is in the breasts, in which case it means that God knows the true intentions behind all words and actions, even when the speaker or agent is unaware of them. ‘We are nearer to him than his jugular vein’ is problematic for many commentators. Some seek to avoid the literal meaning, saying that ‘We’ refers to two Angels ...this is one of several verses that indicate the Immanence of God in all of creation, that the Divine Reality is the substrate of every reality and that God is the nearest and closest reality to the human being. God is with the human beings wherever they may be (57:4) and is always close to them but human beings, nonetheless, often fail to be with or close to God and, thus, remain far from Him.*

So, it remains for us to contemplate on the presence of Allah around us and in us. The ‘*kun*’ that created and animated us, the ruh of Allah that sustains us, the Malaa’ik who accompany us and the heart that speaks His praises and pumps the nourishing, programmed fluid that enters the brain and transfers the messaging that governs the body.

Even so, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا
يُحْيِيكُمْ ؕ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ ؕ وَأَنَّهُ
إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

Oh you who are secured in faith, respond to Allah and the Messenger when He calls you to what gives you life and know that surely Allah comes between the person and his / her heart and that, of a surety, it is to Him that you will be gathered. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 8: ayah 24)

Commentaries

Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *Note that after God and His Apostle are mentioned the pronouns and verbs in the next clause are singular; everything that God’s Apostle put forward as an injunction came by inspiration from God; the Apostle made his will coincide completely with God’s will.*

If the human heart is refractory and refuses to obey the call of God, that is not the end of the matter; God has to be reckoned with. ... Man proposes, but God disposes... The heart is the innermost seat of man’s affections and desires; but between this seat and man himself is the presence of the Omnipresent.

The Study Quran: *That Allah comes between a man and his heart is interpreted to mean that He comes between a disbeliever and faith or between a believer and disbelief or that nothing is hidden from God. ... It can also mean that God has the power to change hearts.*

Ibn Katheer: *It is recorded that Anas bin Malik said that the Prophet said, “Oh You Who changes the hearts, make my heart firm on your religion.” and also*

“The hearts are between two of Allah’s fingers. He changes them as He wills.”

(Both are recorded by Ahmad)

Allah can intercept and interrupt the prompting of our desires, of our emotions and of our intentions. For this we should be so very grateful. And, as the heart is the center of our intellect, Allah can and will also intervene when we are miseducated, correcting, reconstructing and remolding our heart-mind. الحمد لله

The Argument for and against the term Jugular Vein

Positive: It is a (1) **blood vessel** (2) **descending** from the head to the heart. These are the only two facts that figure into the favorable position.

Negative: (1) It is an outer vessel carrying blood in need of purification and oxygenation. (2) It is a carrier of polluted fluid removing waste and toxic residue from the head, face and neck. (3) It is not a singular vessel, as there is one on the right and one of the left sides of the neck.

Does it seem logical that Allah would use these vessels as a manner of describing His nearness to His human servants?

The Argument for and against the Basilar Artery

Positive: (1) It is a single vessel formed from the confluence (merging) of the right and left vertebral arteries. (2) It is the main vessel that provides circulation to the back of the brain – cerebellum, brain stem and occipital lobes. (3) It branches out (flowers) into other arteries that deliver blood to other regions of the brain.

The brainstem coordinates movement and balance and plays a primary role in regulating sleep cycles, digestion swallowing vision breathing and heart rate. The cerebellum assists in regulating voluntary processes such as balance, posture right-left coordination and speech. The occipital lobes are concerned with visual processing.

Negative: It is not descending. (This is one of the various characteristics given for the verb ورد)

This artery, though short in length, flowers out into others at the upper part of the brain stem. If you look at the visual of this artery, you can see the outline of a blossoming rose one of the words that comes from the root verb. So, Allah says it is a cord that has the qualities of arriving and flowering.

And, as with all of our thoughts, insights, ad deductions, we say, **“And Allah knows best.”** The perfection of the Shahadah or Testimony of Belief is in the utilization of the لا by which one rejects, negates, eliminates all other than الله and the Truth that emanates from His Reality. May we be guided to Truth and away from falsehood. May Allah, the All Knowing, continue to teach us and may we always say, as did Prophet Musaa at the end of ayah 67 of Surah 2:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

I take protection with Allah, lest I be of the ignorant. (interpreted meaning)