THE UR-MIGRANTS: THE QURʿĀNIC NARRATIVES OF ADAM AND EVE AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO A CONSTRUCTIVE ISLAMIC THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Theological and Religious Studies

By

Gurbet Sayilgan, M.A.

Washington, DC
November 30, 2015
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Gurbet Sayilgan, M.A.

Thesis Advisor: Daniel A. Madigan, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The study of contemporary migration from a theological standpoint has been mainly approached from within the Christian perspective. Islamic theological reflections on the phenomenon of immigration are rare. The contested legal discourse of ḥaq al-aqalliyāt (jurisprudence specifically adapted to Muslim minorities) remains insufficient to address issues like identity or xenophobia. This work aims to engage the phenomenon of contemporary migration from a qur’anic perspective. At the same time, it is also a particular reading of the Qur’an from a migrant’s viewpoint – a reading which develops in the experience of being an immigrant. More specifically, the narrative of Adam and Eve is the departure point for demonstrating that the Qur’an provides the contours for shaping a fully-rounded Islamic theology of migration addressing Muslim migrant and Muslim host communities alike. To understand migration in a qur’anic light has important theological and practical relevance for Muslims. From a theological perspective, it is to understand the divine in the midst of extensive human movement and mobility and to make deeper sense of God’s actions in this world. The Qur’an speaks of the events in this world – including all motion – as āyāt, signs disclosing something about God.
From a practical standpoint, to understand migration from a qur’anic perspective is to be informed by the moral and ethical ramifications such a reading of the Qur’an might bring to the surface. Which insights can a contemporary re-reading of the Qur’an offer to Muslims – whether they be migrants or hosts – who experience challenges in the face of migration? How can these ethical principles guide believers in their attempts to address a recent phenomenon like migration? These questions are at the core of this study.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was only made possible through the generous support and wisdom by so many extraordinary people. I am deeply grateful to my dissertation committee and my mentors at Georgetown University, particularly my advisor Daniel Madigan who offered his rich expertise and keen eye for details. John Voll constantly encouraged me to think more deeply about a number of critical points. Both challenged me to grow and learn in so many ways. I am also thankful to the many other Christian theologians, especially my committee members Daniel G. Groody and Peter C. Phan, who continue to reflect on the experience of migration and make space for the voices of the unheard, marginal and vulnerable migrants. I am indebted to their works which stirred in me the desire to join this important conversation and offer a Muslim perspective.

In addition, I would like to express my appreciation to Faris Kaya, director of the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture, for making the work of the Muslim theologian Said Nursi available for my research.

This project was inspired first and foremost through my dear parents who left their Kurdish village in the eastern part of Turkey in the early 1970’s to immigrate to Germany. Their dreams, their hopes and concerns for a better future in the new land coupled with their Muslim faith took me to the journey of exploring the reality of migration from a theological perspective. May God reward the sacrifices they made for their children and relatives back home with eternal happiness in the hereafter. I am also indebted to the many friends and families I grew up with in the Muslim immigrant community. I am particularly grateful to the Muslim women’s group in
Mainz which continues to do important grassroots work in guiding Muslim migrant youth to find their place as constructive citizens in this world. They have shaped me in so many countless positive ways. My wonderful sisters Mukaddes, Rabia and Ayse-Gül offered always a shoulder to lean on and comforting words. They made me laugh when it was much needed and uplifted me in times of distress.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my dear husband Salih – the inspiring immigrant who taught me how to be fully at home everywhere and yet completely detach your heart from being settled anywhere. Salih, you have graciously and patiently endured my ups and downs during this journey while ceaselessly providing love, care and support not only for me but also for our beautiful little baby daughter Elif. I love you.

My ultimate gratitude rests with God who is the source of all perfection and beauty. As Muslim scholars have always stated in their intellectual efforts, all good comes from Him, the faults and shortcomings are completely mine. I pray that this work will enable me to serve Him and His beloved creation in more meaningful ways.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

In 2015 the world is witnessing the largest refugee crisis since World War II. The UN Refugee Agency reports that with increased wars and persecution worldwide displacement has reached the highest number ever seen. Almost sixty million people are fleeing their homes and a significant number tries to make the tough journey to seek refuge in places like Europe.¹ The picture of Aylan Kurdi, the little three-year old toddler from Syria, whose body was washed ashore on a Turkish beach went around the world. Although many children continue to die during these life-threatening border crossings, Aylan’s picture showed what tragic high point this humanitarian crisis has reached and questioned our very humanity.

The European continent is overwhelmed with the large influx of refugees and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. European countries are still trying to come to terms on how to respond to the huge influx of newcomers. Germany alone expects nearly a million refugees in 2015. The public is divided and torn apart between the willingness to genuinely help and show solidarity but also grapples with fears of terrorism and the expected burden these refugees might put on their societies. Most of the refugees are Muslims and the fear that some could pose a threat of extremism weighs heavy in the public discourse. While such fears have been unwarranted thus far, they feed into the rhetoric of the growing right-wing parties and their propagation of xenophobia. In the first half of 2015, Germany registered 173 attacks on homes of

asylum-seekers. This is three times higher than the number from previous year.\(^2\) In light of these developments, it is critical to formulate humane discourses which have a positive impact on the public – receiving and migrant communities alike. They should ideally also contribute to the formulation of just policies towards refugees and migrants who are the most vulnerable in this tragedy.

This study aims to engage the phenomenon of contemporary migration from a qur’anic perspective. At the same time, it is also a particular reading of the Qur’an from a migrant’s viewpoint – a reading which develops in the experience of being an immigrant. More specifically, the narrative of Adam and Eve is the departure point for demonstrating that the Qur’an provides the contours for shaping a fully-rounded Islamic theology of migration addressing Muslim migrant and Muslim host communities alike. To understand migration in a qur’anic light has important theological and practical relevance for Muslims. From a theological perspective, it is to understand the divine in the midst of extensive human movement and mobility and to make deeper sense of God’s actions in this world. The Qur’an speaks of the events in this world including all motion – as ayāt, signs disclosing something about God.

From a practical standpoint, to understand migration from a qur’anic perspective is to be informed by the moral and ethical ramifications such a reading of the Qur’an might bring to the surface. Which insights can a contemporary re-reading of the Qur’an offer to Muslims – whether they be migrants or hosts – who experience challenges in the face of migration? How can these

ethical principles guide believers in their attempts to address a recent phenomenon like migration? These questions are at the core of this study and it would be worthwhile to pause and reflect on the practical significance by providing some more context.

1.1 Migration as a Sign of our Time

Migration scholars have come to classify our current era as the “age of migration.” While mobility is not a new phenomenon of human life, today, however, more people than ever leave their home countries due to different reasons. That these new incomers have not always been welcomed with a friendly attitude by their host societies is no secret. In fact, the arrival of migrants causes much debate and conflict within receiving communities. According to a UNHCR report, more than 165,000 refugees and migrants have landed on Italian shores in 2014, most of them rescued when their vessels were in distress. The UN Refugee Agency estimates that over 3,000 have died. The island of Lampedusa has become the center and symbol of a humanitarian crisis. 366 people have died at once on October 3, 2013. After that tragedy nothing much has changed in terms of Europe’s immigration policies. Most of the migrants are trying to escape unrest in Africa and the Middle East, and these numbers are likely to increase. Often migration is therefore perceived as a negative issue resulting in controversial political debates. These polarized public debates not seldom discuss the famous clash of cultures along with

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possible coexistence of religions. If we add to that the dispute over economic resources and human rights, migration becomes a dividing subject for societies.

Contemporary migration touches also on many aspects of human nature. It challenges host and migrant to address notions of identity and belonging, self-worth, claims of superiority, attachments of the heart, separation, xenophobia, weakness, despair, struggle and alienation. One notable example of such scenarios is the increasing number of Muslim migrants in Europe and the tensions caused by their presence. Immigration will continue to strongly shape European economic, political and cultural development. For years now, one of the most pressing concerns in Europe has been the integration of Muslim immigrants into their receiving countries. In this study I will focus principally on the experience of the Muslim migrant community in Germany – the context I am most familiar with. That way the conversation will be less abstract.

At the same time, countries with a Muslim background are receiving a growing number of non-Muslim immigrants. It is therefore vital to engage Muslim host countries in a critical thinking about their treatment of newcomers. Similar to Muslims in Germany, many non-Muslims leave their home countries to work abroad in the hope of being able to provide a better

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7 By ‘Muslim migrants’ I refer to the approximately 2.7 million Muslims from Turkey including those of Kurdish descent (~Six to eight hundred thousand). It is difficult to provide accurate statistics since Kurds from Turkey are not documented as separate ethnicity. I use ‘Turkish Muslims’ to designate Turks and Kurds alike who share Turkey as their country of origin and who are both largely Sunni Muslims. With 63% they represent the largest group among 4.3 million Muslims in Germany. Muslims from Turkey arrived as Gastarbeiter (German: guest worker) in the early 1960’s as part of the movement of labor. Today, four generations of Turkish Muslims live in the country. For a survey on Muslims in Germany consult the governmental report by Sonja Haug, Stephanie Müßig and Anja Stichs, Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland: Im Auftrag der Deutschen Islam Konferenz (Berlin: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2009).
future for their families. Islam in its transnational identity as a universal faith demands that its care transcends borders and include every human being regardless of background.

1.2 The Emergence of Theologies of Migration

Due to its complexity, the phenomenon of migration calls for a multidisciplinary approach. Only by considering the various factors including the push and pull elements of the migration process, a more solid understanding of this issue can be achieved. It is in this light, that a number of Christian theologians have not only acknowledged the importance of studying migration from an interdisciplinary perspective but they have also applied this methodology in their own research. The opposite however remains a rarity. While the research on migration is dominated by the social and political sciences, theology remains to be an outcast in the conversation as has been noted by many theologians. Daniel G. Groody – one of the foremost theologians of migration – observes, that research has been done on migration and religion from a sociological perspective, but there are few works on the topic from a theological perspective. Groody laments that “theology seems to enter the academic territory from the outside, as if it were a ‘disciplinary refugee’ with no official recognition in the overall discourse about migration.” Other theologians have joined him in this valid criticism.

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10 Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 2.
That religion can play a transformative and positive role in the migration and integration process has been established by important research. In her major work, Jacqueline Maria Hagan, for instance, has demonstrated how Christian migrants from Latin America who enter the US, use their faith as an important resource during the migration process. It is through their faith that they find comfort and peace in the midst of various challenges. Furthermore, contrary to popular perceptions, studies show that strong religious affiliation is not a hindrance to integration into mainstream society, but can motivate believers to be more embracing of other faith communities. In his important analysis of quantitative data of immigrant populations in the United States, Canada and Western Europe, Phillip Connor highlights the significant factor of religious observance among migrant communities. He shows that belonging to religious associations and increased faith practice actually play positive roles in the integration process of immigrants. While there are certainly countries in which religious practice can be a hindrance in mainstream society, overall religion fosters the integration process in a constructive way. Those religious forums provide opportunities for migrants to network, strengthen their leadership skills through volunteer activities, establish self-confidence and find spiritual and mental support.

during moments of hardship. Broadly speaking, immigrants with a strong religious belonging feel much happier than those with less religious connection.¹⁵

Christian theologians of migration realize this potential of faith resources and take the beliefs of migrant and host communities seriously when trying to empower them and when trying to address migration issues in a humane way. In this regard, Pope John Paul II’s pastoral visits to various European countries during which he addressed non-Christian migrant groups is quite symbolic. On 18 November 1980, in the German city of Mainz, the Pope spoke to a delegation of Muslims and affirmed the important role of their faith in the new land,

But not all guests in this country are Christians; a particularly large group is committed to the faith of Islam. To you as well do I extend my heartfelt blessed greeting! If with a sincere heart you have carried over your faith from your homeland into this foreign country and pray to God as your Creator and Lord, then you too belong to the large group of pilgrim people who have since Abraham continuously departed to seek and find the true God. If you do not shy away to pray also in public, you give us Christians thereby an example worth of high consideration. Live your faith also in the strange land and do not allow it to be misused by any human or political interest!¹⁶

In the same vein, Thomas Michel notes the significance of faith within the migration process:

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Finally, it should be noted that it would be imprudent to try to explain the attachment of non-Christian migrants to the faith of their ancestors solely on sociological grounds. In many cases, the simple answer is more correct, namely, that it is in the faith handed down by their parents and earlier generations that they encounter God. It is there that they find the consolation, strength and guidance which they need to face life with a sense of purpose and ideals.\textsuperscript{17}

There is undeniably a widespread climate of xenophobia. In order to make room for the marginal voices of immigrants, theologians increasingly focus on the experiences of migrants. They envision a more humane public discourse on this issue but also would like to draw attention to the major social and economic disadvantages that have led to the migrant predicament in the first place. Migration has gradually become a focus of contemporary Christian theology.\textsuperscript{18} In an effort to maintain the fundamental dignity of migrants and to provide spiritual resources for people on the move and for those who minister to them, Christian theology continues to engage constructively with the various aspects of migration. Above all, its task is to explore new theological pathways for contemplating on the divine and His actions in this world through the window of migration.

1.3 The Need for Islamic Theological Reflections on Migration

As the growing body of literature in the area of migration theology attests, the study of contemporary migration from a theological perspective has been mainly approached by Christians. Particularly, Roman Catholic theologians are leading the way. While sociologists

have drawn attention to the increasing religious diversity in Western Europe and the United States in which especially Muslim communities are considerably growing, such diversity of voices has yet to be reflected in the academic discipline of migration theology. As Susanna Snyder and others note, while religious pluralism is a growing reality in these countries, one is hard pressed to identify non-Christian theological discourses on the phenomenon of migration. The authors speculate that this might be “because the category of ‘immigration’ largely preoccupies receiving (historically Christian) countries in the Global North, where it has been constructed as a ‘problem’.” They rightly argue that theological reflection on migration today needs to be interreligious.

The American Academy of Religion has only in 2014 established a new seminar on “Interreligious Reflections on Immigration” which shows the increasing need for such theological work. This is a welcoming move to tackle the global challenge of migration collectively as faith communities. Paradoxically, the seminar in 2014 did not include presentations from or about an Islamic perspective. All of the papers aimed to offer reflections from a Christian viewpoint, again pointing to the need for Muslim voices on the subject. Muslim scholars are therefore invited to enter the academic conversation and formulate theological responses to the issues concerning migration.

In the present context, Muslims are facing a series of new challenges. A 2012 Pew Report states that around 43 million Muslims live in Europe and about 3.5 million Muslims reside in North America.21 Considering these dynamics, Muslims have not yet been engaged much in a systematic theological thinking on various aspects of their migration. To the best of my knowledge, one essay published on this subject is by Amir Hussain, “Toward a Muslim Theology of Migration.”22 Hussain states from the outset of his article that he attempts to offer a mere theological reflection and to avoid the political aspects of migration. Yet, the content does not bring theology as much into the discussion as one is used to from the constructive approaches undertaken by Christian scholars. Religion, as Hussain understands it through the teachings of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, is to study the living faith of individual people. He therefore focuses on showing how migration has continued to intersect with Muslim lives in the past and present era. The essay therefore remains more on a descriptive level. While half of his ten-page article treats the historical migrations, the rest of the segment aims to deconstruct a Huntingtonian “clash of civilizations” or the dichotomy of “Islam and the West.” In that respect, his piece does include a political element and hence presses for a stronger engagement with migration from a theological perspective. Nevertheless, Hussain’s treatment demonstrates how the event of the Qur’an and the history of Islam are embedded in the theme of migration. He rightly points out that the Qur’anic division of the suras into Meccan and Madinan reminds its audience of this rootedness.

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Another essay written by Charles Amjad-Ali “Challenges of Diversity and Migration in Islamic Political Theory and Theology” published in the same volume continues in the same political vein as the title indicates. The author concentrates on how Muslims have treated non-Muslims throughout the past and aims to show what historical paradigms can be helpful in guiding Muslims when dealing with immigration. He discusses several examples: The Constitution of Madina, the Treaty with the Najrani Christians, the Ottoman millat system or the extra-qu’ranic concept of the dhimma. It is therefore mostly instructive for those Muslims who are receiving non-Muslim migrants into their countries.

The volume Strangers in This World: Multireligious Reflections on Immigration provides us with two more Muslim perspectives dealing with the issue of migration. The first one, Hussam S. Timani’s essay entitled “The Islamic Doctrine of Hijra (Migration): Theological Implications,” attempts to formulate an Islamic theology of migration based on the Islamic notion of Tawḥīd. In his work, he first explains how central a concept the hijra occupies within the Islamic tradition by pointing to the migrations of Adam, Abraham, Lot, Jonah, Jacob, Moses, Hagar and Muhammad. As Timani rightly states, the hijra can be characterized as an action of piety, purification and redemption. Piety because God requires the faithful to set out and journey in His name as for example Q 4:98-100 suggests: “But not so the truly helpless men, women, and children who have no means in their power nor any way to leave – God may well pardon these, for He is most pardoning and most forgiving. Anyone who migrates for God’s cause will find

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many a refuge and great plenty in the earth.” In this passage piety is the main reason for people to move. However, purification as for instance in the case of Prophet Adam can be also a reason for migrating. He is sent to earth along with his wife so that their disobedience might be forgiven. The aspect of redemption is also apparent in Prophet Muhammad’s, Mary and Jesus’ and other messengers’ migration. In these cases, as Timani believes, redemption and purification are goals of the journey.24 He then moves onto articulate a theology of migration based on the Tawḥīdı paradigm. This is the section which adds some new insights for Islamic theologies of migration. He argues that erecting barriers and separating oneself from the other opposes the concept of Tawḥīd. Any insistence on the self is an obstacle to the integration of the human being with other fellow beings, with the universe and with God. Because Tawḥīd is concerned also with the interconnectedness of the creation, so much so that the ego is dissolved in the creation and the self is completely annihilated (fanāʾ al-ʾana).25

Timani clearly finds the resources in mystical Islamic philosophy useful for his discourse. While he correctly points out that the culture of egotism has led to arrogance, boastfulness and exploitation of the other or the immigrant, I am hesitant to see the complete annihilation of the human selves in our societies today as a realistic option. I would rather try to argue the other way. That by acknowledging the other and embracing every other person, one’s self gains a greater self or can enlarge one’s self. Since every human self is a unique combination of the divine attributes, by joining these capacities and human selves, one’s own self is enriched and
enlarged. Because through genuine unity and joining these human potentials, much more can be achieved as a global human family. I will focus on this point later in this work. Such an approach seems to be more viable instead of arguing that we need to erase the notion of selfhood. I have difficulty to see the feasibility of such an enterprise within a global climate of strong selfhood and aggressive invididualism. This individualism is so well-spread and established that it is difficult to invite people to completely let go from it.

The other essay written by Muhammad Shafiq takes the title “Immigration Theology in Islam” also appears in the same volume. It surveys first the historical migrations of the early Muslim communities to Abyssinia and Mecca and then takes a look at the different categories Muslim scholars developed in order to classify Muslim and non-Muslim territories. It is interesting to read that Muslims thinkers also formulated the concept of dār al-ammān (abode of peace) and dār al-ijāba (abode of acceptance) along with the classic classifications of dār al-islām, dār al-ḥarb and dār al-daʿwa. Dār al-ammān denotes those regions of non-Muslim lands which guarantee social justice and rights to practice the Islamic faith. Dār al-ijāba similarly defined Muslims living under non-Muslim rule who are accepting the freedom granted by non-Muslims. The article is useful for gaining an overview about how Muslim scholars developed these categories throughout Islamic history. While these terms are certainly implicitly related to Islamic theology and need to be carefully examined, an explicit theological engagement remains outside the scope of this essay.

These examples of approaching migration from Islamic perspectives are good starting points but call for more in-depth theological treatments of the subject. None of the works treat the deeper psychological or mental issues Muslim migrants deal with when going through the process of immigration (i.e. notions of identity, belonging or alienation). The present study is interested in looking at these questions from a qur’anic perspective.

Within contemporary Muslim scholarship, the presence of Muslim migrants in the West has been so far mostly explored from a legal standpoint – the contested approaches to *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* (jurisprudence of Muslim minorities).\(^29\) The major theme of the *hijra* features prominently within this discourse. Though referring to the historical event of Muhammad’s emigration from Mecca to Madina, *hijra* has always carried a much broader set of meanings and was used in different social contexts.\(^30\) Within Muslim scholarship the views over the question whether Muslims should emigrate from non-Muslim countries differ.

For example, the Ḥanbalī legists Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) and Ibn Muflīḥ (d. 763/1362) share the opinion that Muslims should leave their countries if they are denied to practice their faith. Ibn Muflīḥ, however, allowed for two exceptions. For one, *jihād* can be counted as a valid

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29 Said Fares Ahmad Hassan identifies three dominant trends within the current discourse of *fiqh al-aqalliyāt*: 1) the *puritan-literalist* trend, which is represented by the Wahhābī discourse arguing that Muslims should not reside in a non-Muslim polity; 2) the *traditionalist* trend, which is represented by the scholars of al-Azhar maintaining that Muslims can live in non-Muslim lands but they need exceptional rules to meet the requirement of their place and time; 3) the *renewal* trend which has become the dominant discourse asserts the need for a new category of jurisprudence with a new methodological framework that normalizes and empowers Muslim minority life. For his analysis see “Reaching from Within: Establishing a New Islamic Jurisprudence for Muslim Minorities in the West (The Discourse of Fiqh al-Aqalliyāt),” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2011).

reason to stay. In addition, those who are not able to move – women, children and ill people – are also given permission to reside on non-Muslim land.\(^{31}\) Snyder and others draw attention to the case of the partition of India from Pakistan in 1947-48. As Muslims and Hindus had to resettle anew, the topic of migration acquired an entire new meaning. Those Muslims who arrived in Pakistan were called the *muhājirūn*.\(^{32}\)

Another classic pair frequently being discussed within the framework of the jurisprudence of *fiqh al-aqallīyāt*, is *dār al-Islām* (the land of Islam) and *dār al-kufr* (the land of disbelief). This pair describes the dichotomy of two spheres and has been mostly the focus of discussion within classical Islamic thought. With the term *dār al-Islām* Muslim scholars characterized those areas which were under Muslim rule and where Islamic principles were applied. To this stands *dār al-kufr* in contrast. This concept defined a territory which did not belong to any Muslim leadership.\(^{33}\) As Ahmad explains, these two concepts were mainly applied to decide on questions of territorial jurisdiction according to the Ḥanafī school of law.\(^{34}\) Until today, however, they are mistakenly used to characterize the relationship between Islamic and non-Islamic lands as inherently hostile.\(^{35}\)

Besides these two concepts there appears a number of other descriptive terms within the Islamic legal discourse to signify non-Muslim political entities. The application of these concepts

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was largely depending on the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. To give one example, if a territory belonging to the dār al-kufr began war with a country related to dār al-Islām, it would be termed dār al-ḥarb. Moreover, dār al-ḥarb could also cover areas where no rule at all was established and hence was therefore seen as being in a state of chaos. The terms dār al-kufr and dār al-ḥarb have over time obtained the same meaning. From the standpoint of international law the issue was different. There was a clear distinction in understanding these terms. With respect to that, a Muslim ruler was not permitted to initiate an attack on an area connected to the dār al-kufr since there was no reason for starting a war.\(^{36}\)

Further distinctions were made by developing concepts like dār al-muwādaʿa or dār al-ʻahd. Such categories named territories which had signed a peace agreement with dār al-Islām. If Muslims happened to live in a region identified as dār al-ḥarb they had no opportunity for being granted any legal protection (ʿiṣma). Territorial jurisdiction did not allow for such security. If a Muslim was residing in lands characterized as dār al-muwādaʿa some safeguarding could be granted though.\(^{37}\) Another descriptive term for non-Muslim lands called dār al-daʿwa (land of preaching) was articulated by the Muslim jurist Faysal Mawlawi (d. 2011) from the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). This council serves the concerns of Muslim communities in Europe. Mawlawi used this concept of dār al-daʿwa to call upon


Muslims to be welcoming and encountering their new communities with a positive, open attitude.\textsuperscript{38}

In the area of Islamic law such developments of different terms to classify non-Muslim entities still continues. The scholarly discourse on \textit{dār al-Islām} and \textit{dār al-ḥarb} has not come to an end. Such conversation however seems to dismiss the fact that many Muslims in the West no longer feel that the terms capture their experiences of living in traditionally non-Muslim societies. Tariq Ramadan – one of the most outspoken thinkers for Muslims in Europe for example – states,

\textit{Dār al-Islām} and \textit{dār al-ḥarb} are two concepts which cannot be found either in the Qur’ān or in the sunna. They actually do not pertain to the fundamental sources of Islam whose principles are presented for the whole world (\textit{lil-ʿālamīn}), over all time and beyond any geographical limitation. It was the ʿulamāʾ who, during the first three centuries of Islam, by considering the state of the world – its geographical divisions, the powers in place through religious belonging and influence as well as the moving game of alliances – started to classify and define the different spaces in and around them.\textsuperscript{39}

Similarly, in his study on Turkish Muslims living in Germany, Heiko Henkel demonstrates that such a typology no longer articulates the lived experience of many Muslims in the West.\textsuperscript{40} His analysis of this particular community in Germany provides a good example to see how Muslims come to accept that Islam can flourish in a secular context. Because of their distinct background and connectedness to Turkey which has employed secular elements into its

\textsuperscript{39} Tariq Ramadan, \textit{To be A European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context} (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1999), 23.
state apparatus, those Muslims do not perceive Islam and secularism as clashing. In fact, they believe that their faith can be carried out also in a liberal secular framework which very explicitly does not embrace a *sharīʿa* code. With their transnational identity Turkish Muslims follow an Islamic lifestyle in both secular countries. Despite obvious restrictions and obstacles with regards to practicing their religion, they have to come understand that Islam can be lived out in both settings. As Henkel states, some Muslims are more embracing and open towards their non-Muslim environment than others. Some members of the Muslim community even hold very hostile attitude towards non-Muslims.41 This is a key point which has not received significant attention. What are the reasons that lead some devout Muslims to hold the first view and others to a more rejectionist attitude? The issue is therefore much more complex.

That faith informs the worldview and behavior of many Muslims is no secret. It is therefore important to understand how Muslims conceptualize their environment. Especially the classifiers applied to the Western world can have a deep impact on how Muslims relate to their surroundings. Terms like *dār al-Islām*, *dār al-ḥarb*, or *dār al-ʿahd* can determine whether a Muslim believer perceives the land as “home” or “strange land.” Such classifications can affect his whole attitude and are therefore highly significant. Ataullah Siddiqui correctly argues that these formulations embraced by a Muslim have an impact on the whole way of living, “*dār al-ḥarb* suggests temporality, otherness and a sense of compulsion. *Dār al-ʿahd* suggests participation, belonging and responsibility.”42

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41 Henkel, “Rethinking the *Dār al-ḥarb*,” 962.
Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) is not directly related to theology but the theological aim is to help believers to attain God’s pleasure in all human affairs. By practicing rightly according to the detailed fiqh rules the Muslim hopes to reach such a high stage.\(^{43}\) As one might expect, fiqh al-aqallīyāt has dealt less explicitly with concrete theological themes as they relate to migration. As noted earlier, theological anthropology is seldom discussed in depth in spite of its importance for notions of identity or for an analysis of the root causes of xenophobia. The categories discussed above are therefore simply insufficient to address the deeper issues of migration.

On a pastoral level, Muslim religious leaders (imams), for instance in Germany, are not well equipped by the main institutions like the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) to address the ongoing challenges of Muslim migrants.\(^{44}\) Professional education in caring for migrants, including the development of important faith resources, is still in the making.\(^{45}\) There were certainly attempts prior to this. Felix Körner, a Jesuit priest and scholar teaching at the Divinity School in Ankara and Rotraud Wielandt were involved in formation courses in Turkey for imams who would be working in Germany.\(^{46}\) In 2010, the


\(^{44}\) In this context, the important work of Christian pastoral workers who serve migrant communities is noteworthy. For instance, the Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinians), a Roman Catholic order founded in 1887 by Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza (Italy) was established to minister to Italian emigrants. In 1972, they officially expanded the scope of their ministry to all migrants and refugees regardless of nationality or religion.

\(^{45}\) In 2011, the University of Tübingen as the first institution started offering professional education for 320 imams. Still, most of the imams are sent mostly by the Turkish government for a short period of time and have a poor command of German language and culture. For more see Melanie Kamp, “Prayer Leader, Counselor, Teacher, Social Worker, and Public Relations Officer – On the Roles and Functions of Imams in Germany,” in Islam and Muslims in Germany, eds. Ala Al-Hamarneh and Jörn Thielmann (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 133-160.

German government decided to establish several new centers of Islamic theology and a new generation of Muslim theologians with a migrant background is only slowly emerging.\textsuperscript{47}

Given this state of affairs, Christian theologies of migration could offer some direction and inspire Muslims to reflect on their own theological resources for developing a more in-depth Islamic vision of migration and while doing so expand the branch of \textit{fiqh al-aqallīyāt}. One might be hesitant for such a project to be undertaken since it can seem like an attempt to “fit” Islam into pre-defined categories that have been largely developed by and are familiar to Christians. Looking at the intrinsic relationship of Islam with Christianity however and the dialogical approach taken by the Qur’an with previous religious communities, such reservations can be set aside. Since its inception, Islam has drawn out theological similarities with the Christian faith while developing its own unique set of thinking.

This study hopes to join the already well-established and rich conversation of Christian theologians on migration and add a Muslim perspective to the discourse. Migration as a global phenomenon calls for a collective effort of all faith communities. With changing religious landscapes around the globe, theologies of migration therefore need to also take the interreligious aspect into consideration. This work is also an attempt to begin to compensate for the stark

\textsuperscript{47}For more information on the establishment of Centers of Islamic Theology at four university locations in Münster/Osnabrück, Tübingen, Frankfurt/Giessen and Nuremberg-Erlangen see the official announcement by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, “Contemporary Integration Policy: Islamic Theology at German Universities,” http://www.bmbf.de/de/15619.php. There is also the “Zentrum für Komparative Theologie und Kulturwissenschaften” (The Center for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies) launched in 2009 at the University of Paderborn which is also in the process of establishing a chair in Islamic theology. The official appointment of a Muslim professor has been slow since the candidate has to be approved by the local Muslim community and it is not always clear who represents that community.
absence of Muslim migrant voices, among whom I consider myself, and who remain mostly objects of this conversation on religion and migration but not active participants in it.
Chapter 2 – A Brief Profile on Turkish Migrants in Germany: 
Gastarbeiter, Gurbetçiler and Almancılars

We asked for workers. 
We got human beings instead 
~Max Frisch (1911-1991)

October 30, 1961 was a historic day in the relationship between Germany and Turkey. In 2011 it was fifty years since these two countries signed the famous guest worker (Gastarbeiter)\textsuperscript{48} agreement.\textsuperscript{49} Since then there has been much debate about the positive and negative outcomes of this historically unique migration. While there is no denying that migration continues to bring positive results for Muslim migrants and their host society, in the following I focus on the negative impacts as experienced by the first generation of Muslims and their children after their move to Germany.

For this purpose, I will study a sample of Turkish poems and a selection of folklore songs written by migrants themselves. Migrant literature from Germany is still a very recent phenomenon since the first immigrants arrived as members from a mostly lower uneducated social class from rural areas. Many of these labor workers simply did not have time to engage with educational activities besides work. It was their children who then were able to obtain an education and became skilled in writing while their parents were working. My own parents and many more families in our immediate surroundings in Germany were mostly villagers who had

\textsuperscript{48} While the term Gastarbeiter is not used anymore to refer to the migrant community, it still captures the self-definition of the first generation of Muslim migrants. Over time the labeling of temporary labor workers has changed from Gastarbeiter to Ausländer (foreigner) to Migrant or Einwanderer (immigrant).

rarely the means to obtain an education. My peers and I were most often the first members of these families who were able to attend school since the German government provided access for free education. There are now a number of authors from the younger generation of migrant families who write very personal accounts about their experiences and migrant life.50

Turkish culture has always been dominated by emotional and expressive elements such as poems and songs. Especially the genre of folk or arabesque songs (Türk Halk Müzikleri) continues to express the deepest personal and social sentiments of the Turkish population. If the written discourse was inaccessible for many due to illiteracy, the songs and poems as an oral discourse occupied even a greater role in the lives of migrants. I grew up with these songs and always felt that they spoke very genuinely about the migrant experience. They articulated the deep sorrow and nostalgia which especially the first generation of migrants felt, and these songs and poems were constantly present in the soundscape of migrant families. They were frequent companions in our lives. In that sense, they provide an authentic window into the minds and hearts of Turkish migrants in Germany and give preference to the migrants’ voices themselves who are often treated as objects in the discourse on migration. Few among those involved in the public migration discourse approach the issues from the perspective of the Turkish migrant community and thus lack a critical viewpoint. As far as I know, to examine migrant poems and

50 See for example Betül Durmaz, Döner, Machos und Migranten: Mein zartbitteres Lehrerleben (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009); Mehmet Gürcan Daimagüler, Kein schönes Land in dieser Zeit: Das Märchen von der gescheiterten Integration (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011); Semiya Şimşek, Schmerzliche Heimat: Deutschland und der Mord an meinem Vater (Berlin: Rowohlt Berlin, 2013); Adnan Maral, Adnan für Anfänger: Mein Deutschland heisst Almanya (München: Blanvalet Verlag, 2014); Hatice Akyün, Einmal Hans mit scharfer Sosse: Leben in zwei Welten (München: Goldmann Verlag, 2007); Aslı Sevindim, Candlelight Döner: Geschichten über meine deutsch-türkische Familie (Berlin: Ullstein Taschenbuch, 2005); Lale Akgün, Kebabweihnacht (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2011).
songs in order to understand the migrant mindset has not been significantly undertaken in the field of migration theology and could help us to get a better understanding of the deeper issues. This avenue suggests further paths for research and is an additional contribution to the larger field of theology of migration. The examination of migrant poems seeks to address this limitation.

Sarah Thomsen Vierra has approached the Turkish migrant community through the study of its self-produced film and literature. While these are unconventional sources, Thomsen Vierra argues that the researcher has no choice but to do so since these are the only self-portrayals available. She reminds us of the social background of this particular population. Belonging mostly to a lower socio-economic class and having temporary residence in Germany, many migrants neither have the opportunity nor the necessary skills to participate in the public discourse. Furthermore, major hesitation existed to participate in the German political landscape since many were still connected to the homeland and did not seek to get into trouble with the ruling authorities. It is therefore vital to take into consideration those fictional or non-fictional works created by the Turkish migrant community. It becomes therefore obvious why these resources are often the only ones which provide a window into the emotional world of this population. They certainly enrich the research conversation to a great deal.51

In order to navigate around these circumstances, Turkish migrants found alternative ways to articulate their concerns and feelings. In justification of utilizing such non-traditional sources for research, Thomsen Vierra refers to an article written by Gary D. Stark titled “Vom Nutzen

51 Sarah Thomsen Vierra, “Representing Reality: Literature, Film, and the Construction of Turkish-German Identity” (MA Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 5.
Stark’s arguments in supporting the use of creative works are equally useful for our purposes. Most importantly, he draws attention to the fact that these sources are not always coherent with the reality of things. Furthermore, specific elements in a story can be often more highlighted by an author than other points. The researcher should therefore focus on the question why exactly this is the case. By raising these questions, scholars can uncover the dynamics which have led to the writer’s particular choices. Such choices reveal much about the self-perception of a group.

In terms of the reception of a particular work, the scholar can uncover mental attitudes of the society in which the literature is read. The significance of the reader should not be dismissed in analyzing fictional literature. Again, why is it that a certain work gains more popularity than others and what does that tell the scholar about the audience and its views? The researcher can hence uncover new connections and perspectives through analyzing this dynamic. Approaching the poems under consideration will therefore be a useful way to reveal important aspects regarding the migration experience.

The objective of the analysis of Turkish migrants’ poems and songs is two-fold: First, to explore how Germany as the new environment and Germans as the new people are perceived in the emotional and mental world of Turkish migrants. I will here refrain from evaluating whether these depictions of Germany as the host country and Germans as the receiving community are accurate or not. Rather, I would like to give space to the migrants themselves to voice their

feelings. Hence, this portion is not a critical exercise. If useful I will provide some background information or data to the issues raised in the works.

The second goal is to identify the struggles and issues these migrants face in the context of their transition. These intimate and personal accounts should simply serve as a foundation to formulate a theology that is responsive to the migrant experience. Taken altogether such a study will demonstrate the relevance of an Islamic theological response since faith is a significant element in the lives of Turkish Muslims. In the subsequent chapters, I aim to bring the Qur’an into conversation with these migrant issues. Before going into the actual analysis of these Turkish poems and folklore songs, an understanding of the key term gurbet is necessary. This phrase continues to be the main concept by which Germany has been usually referred to by Turkish migrants.

_Gurbetçiler_ – this is the term by which Turkish Muslims who live away from their original “home” are usually referred to and describe themselves. Since I was the first member of my Kurdish family to have been born in Germany, away from “home,” my grandmother named me Gurbet. As Ruth Mandel rightly observes,

The gurbetçi – one who lives in exile, diaspora, or away from the homeland – lives in a state of gurbet (estrangement, alienation). It is a relative term, one that might describe the state of those living in Frankfurt, as well as Turks living in Istanbul, who feel that their primary identification is with their natal village rather than the city.\(^54\)

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The Turkish term *gurban* comes from the Arabic word *al-ghurba*. *Al-ghurba* denotes “the absence from the homeland; separation from one’s native country, banishment, exile; life or place away from home.”

A well-known narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammad states, “Be in this world like a stranger (*gharīb*), or one who is passing through (ʿābiru sabīl), and consider yourself as one of the people of the graves.”

Another statement describes Muhammad as saying, “Islam began strange (*gharīban*), and it will become strange (*gharīb*) again just like it was at the beginning, so blessed are the strangers (*al-ghurabāʾ*).” It is interesting that Hamza Yusuf, a leading American Muslim scholar, employs this particular Prophetic tradition in one of his lectures. He says,

> Many things have gone wrong in the Muslim *umma*. And we must recognize that, if we are to move on. And we, in the United States, have a unique historical position. Our unique historical position is that we are neither of the East nor of the West. We are people living in a space that Allah *subḥānu wa taʿāla* has described as the space of the strangers. [We are] *al-ghurabāʾ* – people who neither feel they are of this or of that. Because we are seeking to live a life committed to a spiritual path – *wa-inna ilā rabbika al-muntahā*, to your Lord is your end,” in the midst of the cornucopia of nihilistic materialism. We are struggling to maintain our souls. We are not the only one. There are many people in this society who are having the same struggle and we have to recognize that.

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58 It is noteworthy that Hamza Yusuf draws here on a familiar phrase from *sura al-nūr*, “God is the Light of the heavens and earth. His light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree, *from neither east nor west*, whose oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it – light upon light – God guides whoever He will to his Light; God draws such comparisons for people; God has full knowledge of everything.”
The Sufi tradition in particular has employed the term *ghurba* in its descriptions of the spiritual development and the path to the divine. The traditions are understood to suggest an attitude of a believer as being actively involved in the world while not being preoccupied in the heart with worldly affairs. It denotes a detachment of the heart from this world while being entirely focused on one’s final destination – the hereafter. Juliane Hammer offers one description of the philosophical meaning of *ghurba* as presented by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in one of his lectures on Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi (1153-1191). In his *Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, Suhrawardi narrates the “Tale of Occidental Exile.” In this story *al-ghurba*, as exile means to be living in distance of God. Nasr puts it as follows which also captures the feelings of Turkish Muslims in Germany,

The root of *ghurba*, the verb *gharaba*, is in a lexical/philosophical sense linked to its opposite *sharaqa*. *Al-sharq* is related to the rising sun; it is the East or Orient. Even in European languages, to be oriented literally means to face the sun. The sun as the source of light is, in Islamic philosophy, a symbol for God, who is the One from whom all light originates. The West, as the opposite, implies being away from the sun, in the darkness. Thus, the term *ghurba* means religiously and philosophically barred from the light. For the majority of Muslim migrants who felt forced to migrate due to economic deprivation, the term *ghurba* carried an intense melancholic feeling of longing, of nostalgia, of homesickness and separation, of a severe yearning for a place where one’s heart was living. How

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does Germany as *gurbet* feature in the poems and folk songs under consideration? Many Turkish authors and singers have referred to the large repertoire of exile and *gurbet* experiences.\textsuperscript{62}

The sample study of these poems published on popular Turkish poem websites like *Edebiyat Defteri* (The Literature Book) all carry the word “Almanya” (Germany) in their titles.\textsuperscript{63} Most of the titles are already suggestive of the negative content of the poems: *Almania Acı Vatan* (Germany the painful homeland), *Almanya, Zalim Vatan* (Germany the oppressive homeland), *Almanya Seni Sevmiyorum* (Germany I do not love you), *Almanyayı Sevemedim* (I could not love Germany), *Almanya’ya Küskünüm* (I am angry with Germany), *Almanya Altın Kafes* (Germany the golden cage), *Almanya Hüükümeti Kalk Ayağa Suçlusun* (Oh German government stand up – You are guilty), *Almanya’da Yangınlar – Birbirini Izliyor. Savcılar ve Hâkimler – Yapanları Gizliyor* (In Germany, the fires follow one after another. The lawyers and judges are hiding the criminals), *Almanya’da Dazlaklar – Gemi Aldı Azıyı* (In Germany the skinheads took over the ship).

If one turns to the actual content of the poems the negative impression is quickly confirmed. Germany as the new environment is portrayed as *Gurbet* – a strange place where it is


\textsuperscript{63} “Almanya Konulu Şiirler” (Germany themed poems) http://www.edebiyatdefteri.com/almanya/siirleri/.
impossible for the migrant – the *garip* (stranger) – to belong and find emotional comfort.\(^{64}\) Interestingly, Şahin and Kebabci describe in their poem *Almanya* that Germany first felt like home but then underwent a transformation in turning into a place of *gurbet*: “While once this place belonged to us, now Germany has turned into *gurbet* for us.”\(^{65}\) In the same vein, the popular poet Bedirhan Gökçe\(^{66}\) describes the change of attitudes by Germans. When the immigrants first arrived in Germany the hosts were very welcoming, but later on became more hostile:

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Hmm, what has happened? All of a sudden the times have changed. It was not long ago. Twenty-five or thirty years ago, they welcomed us with elegant suits. All these years we have been taking care of the unbelievers’ (*gavurun*\(^{67}\)) trash. And now they look at us with hostility, and even burn our homes. This is really hard to shoulder, my brother.\(^{68}\)
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The migrants express their strong feelings of religious, cultural, social and geographical alienation throughout their poems. As for religious alienation, Ozan Karapeçê speaks for instance

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\(^{64}\) For references and full translations of all poems please see the Appendix. All translations of the poems are my own. While translating I tried to focus on the content rather than preserving the stylistic elements like rhyme. See for example Ozan Karapeçê, “*Almanya,*” 300; Ozan Yıldız, “*Almanya,*” 305; S/Aye, “*Almanya,*” 309; Bibi, “*Almanya, Zalim Vatan,*” 314; Şair Fevza, “*Almanya Seni Sevmiyorum,*” 316; Yaşar Yön, “Almanya” 318; Mehmet Talip Bilgil, “*Almanya,*” 320; Erdem Can, “*Almanyayı Severmedim,*” 322; Suphi Çapacı, “*Almanya,*” 346; Melih Çiloğlu, “*Almanya,*” 326; Ismail Kurt, “*Almanya Acı Vatan,*” 311; Adnan Şahin, “*Almanya’ya Küskünüm,*” 329; Kübra Yüksel, “*Almanya Bir Altın Kafes,*” 331;

\(^{65}\) See Osman Şahin and Ayşegül Kebabci, “*Almanya,*” “*Bir zamanlar bizim iken o diyar, Şimdi gurbet oldu bize Almanya,*” 302.

\(^{66}\) Bedirhan Gökçe living in Turkey is widely known in the Turkish diaspora. He is a very popular poet who hosts an award winning daily radio show called “Bedirhan Gökçe ile Üçüncü Sayfa” (With Bedirhan Gökçe the Third Page) on the major channel *Kral FM* based in Istanbul. His Facebook page alone has almost three million followers and indicates the reach of these poems. For more details, see https://tr-tr.facebook.com/bedirhangokcesayfasi.

\(^{67}\) The term *gavur* describes all who are not Muslims and is especially used in reference to Christians. The word, first employed as a term of contempt and reproach, has become so general that in most cases no insult is intended in its use.

\(^{68}\) Bedirhan Gökçe, “*Almanya Mektubu,*” 343: “*Heh...Ulen noldu da değişti devran. Çok deel, Yirmibeş otuç yıl önce bizi bandoyan karşıladilar, Bunca yıl gavurun pisliğiniyen uğras, Sonra sana düşman gibi baksınlar, Ataş verip, düneğini yakınlar, Adamannın ağarına gidiyor gardaş.*”
about the lack of visible Islamic religious symbols such as the call to prayer. Hearing the church bells makes him even feel more that he is a stranger (gurbetçi) who does not belong here.\textsuperscript{69} The hope that one will be united at least in death with his home country and receive a proper Islamic funeral prayer performed by Muslims is also stated: “Now life is far away. Even if we would decide to live, our remaining years are too few. If God would allow us to spend the last days in our missed land, then at least some Muslims could perform a funeral prayer over us.”\textsuperscript{70}

Germany is also being accused of trying to alienate the Muslim youth from their religion and its practices. Moreover, it is seen as attempting to turn the youth – whom Germany treated as second class citizens – to Christianity as this poem states: “You treated their children as second class citizen. But for the Europeans you would even stand up [and show respect]. You took off their [the Muslim women] head scarves, and hanged crosses around their necks. You exploited these poor people and threw them away on the street.”\textsuperscript{71} Another author describes Germans as embracing no religion at all and also lacking a culture of shame (hayâ): “On the one hand there are the fires [the burning of migrant homes] – it [Germany] neither has a religion nor shame (hayâ).”\textsuperscript{72}

In terms of cultural and social alienation, the poems portray Germany as a place which does not conform to the migrant’s true essence or personality. It is only in Turkey where the

\textsuperscript{69} Karapeçê, 300.
\textsuperscript{70} Karapeçê, 301, “Şimdi hayat çok uzak, yașasakda ömür az, Allah nasip etsede, silada olsak biraz, Hiç değilse ölmeye, Cenazemizde namaz, Kilar üç beş müslüman, o kulları bana sor.” See also Çapaci, 346; Adnan Şahin, 330.
\textsuperscript{71} Bilgil, 320: “Evlatlarına ikinci muamelesi yaptın, Avrupali gelince ayağa kalkın. Başını açtın, boynuna haç taktın, Garibini kullanıdın, attın sokağa.”
\textsuperscript{72} Sancak, 335 “Almanya Hükümeti Kalk Ayağa – Suçlusun,” “Bir tarafın yangınlar – ne dini var ne hayâ.”
generations will find their roots and fulfil themselves. Germans are perceived as selfish people not truly interested in communal life. The language barriers also add to feelings of cultural estrangement. Not being able to articulate oneself in the local German language pains the migrant. One line seems to also accuse Germans of trying to alienate Turks from their own culture, “You [Germany] tried very hard [to change me], but my culture came out strong,” and further, “Your culture and religion should stay with you.”

The fear of losing or forgetting one’s cultural ties and values to the Turkish homeland is also prevalent. One poem expresses distress about the fact that some migrants married German women which could further alienate them from their culture. Especially, the third generation who neither belongs fully to Turkey nor to Germany is seen as being in danger of falling into limbo. Despite the fact that the younger generation of Turkish Muslims has been more integrated into German society, they still experience difficulties in adapting to the larger community. Low levels of education, high rates of unemployment, poverty, crime and drug use enforce greater feelings of alienation.

Another poem narrates the story of the daughter of a Turkish migrant who ran away with a German man. The father – full of shame and emotions of dishonor – feels being disconnected from his own children as he could not convince them to embrace Turkish culture and values: “Do

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73 See for example Özgen, 324.
74 Gökçe, 344.
75 See for example Osman Şahin and Kebabiçı, 302; Kurt, 311.
76 Güneş, 303: “Çok uğrastın sağlam çıkı kültürüm” and “Senin olsun dinin kültürün harsın.” See also Fevza, 316: “I was born a Turk, and will die as a Turk. I only know one [sacred] book – the Qur’an. All praise be to God, I say I am a Muslim” (Ben TÜRK doğдум TÜRK ölürüm, Birtek kitap KURANI bilirim, ELHAMDULILLAH, Müslümanım derim.)
78 Kurt, 313.
you remember Abdullah – the son of bald Musa? His eldest daughter ran away with an unbeliever (gavur). His name is Hans, they say. A blonde guy. Abdullah feels so ashamed and every day he gets worst, they say.” In this regard, one paragraph articulates very well this fear of the youth being religiously and culturally alienated:

Now the 50th anniversary [of the Gastarbeiter agreement] is celebrated. All three generations should be interested in this occasion. The third generation is fortunate as well as disconnected from its own culture. There is a generation living in-between. Will they be Germans or Turks, it is not clear. While the ethnicity is not important, faith is very important. But it is also not clear what religion they will belong to.

With respect to social advancement, one poem offers a glimmer of hope in stating that the younger generation has finally achieved major accomplishments and is now able to keep up with the Germans. Not only do they speak the language very well but they can also compete with the “higher” social class of Germans. A sense of competition seems to be prevalent in this and other poems indicating how migrants cultivated prior feelings of inferiority due to lack of education and language skills,

Our people suffered a lot under your authority oh Germany. We could not understand each other because I did not have the language skills. Now my Hasan knows not only the language but also the sciences. Thanks be to God, we have reached you now, oh Germany. Our technology advanced highly, the Turks are progressing as never before. Now it is our time to receive some worldly success, now you became wise and bowed down, oh Germany.

80 Bibi, 314: “Şimdi ellinci yılı kutlanıyor, bence üç nesli ilgilendirir bu konu, Üçüncü nesil hem şanslı ve hem de kendi kültüründen koptu, Bir ara nesil var orada, Alman mı olacak Türk mü, o belli değil, Irk değil ama inanç çok önemli, onun da ne olduğu belli değil...”
The lines written below by Osman Şahin and Ayşegül Kebabcı tell even how Turks have advanced over the years compared to Germany by maintaining a healthy growth of the population which is much younger than the German one. Compared to them, Germany is in decline in terms of its demography. It is in need of the Turkish migrants to take care of its increasingly older citizens. Turks can therefore maintain a dynamism. Furthermore, Germany has experienced an economic downfall during the global financial crisis while Turkey did not.

Apparently, such expressions aim to eradicate deep seated notions of inferiority and dependence,

Your population is old, you were in need of us. The evil eye has caught you because you have fallen into crisis. Now we have reached your speed, oh Germany. The day has arrived that your numbers decline, your older citizens increased and your head went down, you fell into crisis and now your magic is gone. Oh Germany you are in need of our soil. 82

Geographically speaking, many migrants came from small villages in rural areas of Turkey surrounded by the natural landscape of mountains and rivers and hence were not used to the new urban setting, which again added to their lack of belonging. City life meant a more anonymous and less intimate engagement with their surroundings and intensified their sense of uprootedness. 83 To explore and appreciate the new German landscape and environment remains still a rarity among Turkish families. I remember from my childhood that visiting other German cities and becoming familiar with the new environment was rarely an interest for the first

82 Osman Şahin and Kebabcı, 303, “Yaşlıydı nüfusu nuhtaçın bize, Nazar değdi şimdi gelmişsin göze, Duydum ki bu ara düşmüşün krize, Yetişik sendeki hiza Almanya. Gün geldi Almanya sayın döküldü, Yaşlılar çoğaldı boynun hü küldü, Krize dem vurdun ilmek söküldü, Muhtaçsin bızdeki toza Almanya.”

83 Gökçe, 343.
generation of migrant families. If we occasionally visited a family in another German city, there was usually little curiosity to explore the city itself. The time together was mostly spent inside the homes. Hence, my peers and I were used to perceiving Germany as a place of work and not for enjoyment. This inevitably intensified the notion of *gurbet* – the feeling that we simply do not belong here. It comes therefore as no surprise that Turkish Muslims tended to long for the summer time to arrive during which they enjoyed “real life.”

The climate in Germany – depicted as cold and lacking a summer season – also receives the attention of these migrant poets and is contrasted with the long hot summer months and warm environment in Turkey. Some migrants believe that the cold climate has also an impact on the attitude and character of Germans who are described as coldblooded which comes out in these lines:

The sun does not shine above their mountains, the grape of their vineyard is sour. They are coldblooded. How can I ever love you, oh Germany? It is always cloudy and never bright. The sun is not visible while it goes down. There is no distinction between the summers or winter season. How can I ever love you, oh Germany?

The Germans are perceived as not being easily approachable and as preserving a certain distance from the newcomers, giving them the impression of being unwelcome and unwanted.

The poems talk about the financial and economic burden many migrants have to shoulder, not only for their families in Germany but also for their relatives in their country of origin. Poverty as a major motivation to emigrate is central to these poems. The sense of having

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84 See for example Karapeçe, 300.
been forced to migrate and the notion of self-sacrifice feature strongly in these poems. This sense of compulsion naturally resulted in feelings of psychological imprisonment. The decision to move was felt as being forced and naturally increased the longing for the homeland. The intention was to stay only temporarily for some months, but the realization that fifty years had passed makes the migrant feel imprisoned and incapable of making own choices. Now, with children and grandchildren to whom they are strongly attached, the older migrant generation has no choice but to stay and feels in-between not fully belonging anywhere.

Most of the families perceived themselves as short-term residents planning eventually to return. However, many different reasons, such as indebtedness or family issues, hindered them from doing so. This again resonates with my own experience. Even after having their six children and four grandchildren who were all born in Germany, my parents still hold on to the myth of “the final return” – the kesin dönüş as it is called in popular migrant vocabulary. They initially planned for a temporary stay in order to save enough to buy a tractor and then return to their village in Eastern Turkey.

In her essay “Shifting centres and emergent identities: Turkey and Germany in the lives of Turkish Gastarbeiter,” Ruth Mandel provides an accurate description of the predicament many Turkish migrants face through their double-belonging to Germany and Turkey. These observations align with my own experiences of the Turkish migrant community and I would like to therefore highlight briefly some of Mandel’s assessments. Due to the fact that Germany is

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86 See for example Karapeçe, 300; Çapaci, 346; Yüksel, 331.
87 See for example Karapeçe, 300; Şahin and Kebabci, 302.
88 See for example Karapeçe, 301.
perceived as *gurbet*, many migrants cannot wait for the summer months to arrive so that they can finally return back home even if only for a short period. In order to appear rich to their families and relatives in their home country, many Turkish people spend a significant amount of money for goods and cars. Sometimes a new car is only purchased for the purpose of showing off and presenting oneself as someone who has climbed higher in social status. Many relatives back home have no clue about the difficulties and hardships many migrants have to endure to earn these goods. It is therefore a false self-representation of migrant life and one which actually harms the migrant in many ways. ⁸⁹

Once people arrive in Turkey for their vacation, they have to endure another pain of alienation and displacement. Their fellow Turks perceive them as strange and as people who have dramatically changed so that they are denied to reclaim their original identity. They realize that they are not accepted fully as they are. Instead they are called called *Almancilar* – German-lish, or German-like. Such naming connotes something negative about living in Germany. The migrant Turk is no longer accepted as authentic and faces a different sort of discrimination by being named *Almancı*. ⁹⁰ As Mandel states, the term *Almancı* “is a distancing mechanism, expressing the ambivalence contained in the same outstretched arms which greet the returning vacationers […] but also keep them at a socially safe distance.” ⁹¹ The following poem captures

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⁹⁰ Mandel, “Shifting centres and emergent identities,” 158.
⁹¹ Mandel, “Shifting centres and emergent identities,” 158-159.
this dilemma, “Here they call us strangers, foreigners. There, they call us German-like. Oh, my Anatolia, we’re caught in between. Just don’t stab us through the heart.”

In Turkey, people think that the Almancılar have accumulated much wealth and are now members of a higher social economic class. This is why many relatives and neighbors in Turkey expect financial help from these migrants which puts a high burden on their shoulders. They are therefore not able to return to their original personalities. If someone enters a circle of gurbetçiler it is very likely that many families will begin talking about these issues and how much they feel abused financially by their families back home. The psychological pressure of taking care of large families in Germany as well as in Turkey, as I observed in my own social environment, was immense and has even ripped families in Germany apart. Sometimes, due to a sense of guilt, a person prioritizes relatives left at “home” more than the immediate family in Germany. The person spends most of the income on the former which leads to many conflicts and arguments within families.

Those Turkish migrants who experience that different sort of alienation in their original homes slowly feel disillusioned. They therefore try to get in touch with those families they have known from Germany. With them, they are able to share the same feelings without being burdened by any demands. With those families they feel more comfortable, because they share the same background and experiences. But because expectations remain high, Turkish immigrants are trapped into staying longer in Germany than anticipated. Without the financial

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92 Poem written by anonymous Turk cited in Mandel, “Shifting centres and emergent identities,” 159.
93 Mandel, “Shifting centres and emergent identities,” 159.
means they cannot fulfil their obligations. “On the one hand, their ‘Turkishness’ marginalizes the migrants in the German context; on the other, the markedness of being Almancılar in Turkey, the inability to merge back into the Turkish mainstream, entraps Turkish Gastarbeiter in a circular quest for an increasingly elusive identity,” says Mandel.

The poems articulate how the migrant has lost not only physical health during the many years of hard labor in Germany but also emotional wellbeing. Many poems incorporate strong terms like hüzün (sadness), dert (pain), yara (wound), özlem (longing), hasret (yearning), sanca (torment), çile (suffering), sızı (ache), hüsran (disappointment), efkar (melancholy), feryat (clamour, cry), sila (homesickness), iškence (torture), kahir (great sorrow), keder (anguish), üzüntü (distress), gam (grief), zindan (dungeon) to convey the negative emotional state of being in Germany. Intense loneliness, the pain of separation, feelings of delusion, isolation, confusion, hopelessness, extreme solitude, captivity, regret and remorse for making the wrong decision to leave the homeland – all these emotions are given primacy in the poems. In this sense, it is impossible for the migrant to feel happiness. Problems are not lessening over the years but increasing. A deep longing and yearning for the vatan (homeland) is constantly present and the days are spent in darkness and do not pass by. The separation from friends and relatives has resulted in emotional diseases that have no treatment according to one author.

Another person even states that Germany had made her regretful for being alive. Germany is

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95 Mandel, “Shifting centres and emergent identities,” 160.
97 See for example Osman Şahin and Kebabcı, 302; Karapeçe, 300; Yıldız, 306; Yavuz, 307; Kurt, 312.
98 See for instance S/Äye, 309; Fevza, 316; Özgen, 324; Çiloğlu, 326; Yüksel, 331.
100 Yıldız, 305.
101 Yıldız, 306.
portrayed as lacking compassion (merhametsiz), cruel (gaddar), bloodthirsty (hunhar) and oppressive (zalim).\textsuperscript{102}

One poem points to the important link between physical and emotional health. Performing lower jobs like the hard work in the coal mines has also resulted in personal feelings of degradation. The migrant has done the work no one else wanted to do because it was regarded as dirty and inhumane: “We worked at the coal mines inhaling coal all the time, and spend our days at the factory holding the iron to melt. Following the orders, we worked in the dirtiest profession. Come and ask me now about my decaying knees and back.”\textsuperscript{103} Germany in this sense has taken all health, dignity, strength and energy from the migrant. Feelings of outer diseases and inner psychological issues feature strongly. The migrant feels exploited and abused for being only appreciated as a work force as these lines state: “Oh Germany, you took away my sister, my brother. You used their efforts for your advancement. You abused them, exploited them and discarded them, believing they are not useful anymore. You threw the poor ones into sickness and emptiness.”\textsuperscript{104} Germany, according to these migrant voices, was only interested in their cheap labor, enslaved them and has taken their youth away.\textsuperscript{105}

Some authors assign the guilt for their predicaments to Turkey which had not only destroyed the economy and forced people to leave but sold its people as slaves to Germany.\textsuperscript{106}

One author warns his friends back home not to even consider coming to Germany since its

\textsuperscript{102} See for example Çiloğlu, 326.
\textsuperscript{103} Karapeçe, 301: “Maden ocaklarında, kömürü yuta yuta, Fabrikada eriyan, demiri tuta tuta, En pis işte çalıştık, başta emir komuta, Çürüyen dizlerimi, bu belleri bana sor.”
\textsuperscript{104} Bilgil, 320, “Ah Almanya bacımı aldın, ağamı aldın. İmarında kullanımdan emeklerini. Kullandın kullanın attın, işe yaramaz diyे, Garibimi, hastalığa attın boşluğa.”
\textsuperscript{105} See for example Yön, 318; Bilgil, 320; Çiloğlu, 326; Kurt, 312; Adnan Şahin, 329.
\textsuperscript{106} See for instance Adnan Şahin, 330.
golden age has passed. He adds that while economic wellbeing is granted, emotional health is taken entirely away.\textsuperscript{107} Hence migrants’ physical potential, their bodies were used but their emotional dimensions and needs were entirely neglected, according to these testimonies. The migrant feels wounded emotionally through the years of separation and emotions of alienation. While economic needs were satisfied, emotional needs were not as this line states: “You [Germany] gave us bread, but you did not love our kind.”\textsuperscript{108}

Although the \textit{Gastarbeiter} generation helped to build the country and contributed to its advancement, many migrants express their sorrow that this has not been fully acknowledged and that the achievements of this generation has never been truly valued as the following poem says it: “They say that civilization exists in the West, but it was my people who contributed with their hard work. Time passed by, all of them were forgotten, now what remains are only laments [about immigrants].”\textsuperscript{109}

The subjects of discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia are also themes articulated in these Germany poems. One line states very strongly: “You oppressed us, but we did not oppress you. You slapped us and if that was not enough, you even created more obstacles.”\textsuperscript{110} Migrants feel increasingly discriminated against through the travel restrictions for their families who cannot enter the country for residence or visit without fulfilling a range of legal requirements. Many migrants report what a problem it is to be united with their loved ones as Germany’s

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\textsuperscript{107} Gökçe, 331-332.  \\
\textsuperscript{108} Osman Şahin and Kebabci, 291, “Ekmek verdin, ama sevmedin tür’üm.”  \\
\textsuperscript{109} Bibi, 302: “Medeniyet batıda deniyor ama ağır işçisi benim insanlarımdı. Aradan zaman geçti, hepsi unutuldu, bize laf-ı güzafi kaldı...”  \\
\textsuperscript{110} Osman Şahin and Kebabci, 291, “Ezdin ezilmedin bizi yurumuştun, Yetmez gibi yola seddi kurmuştu.”
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immigration laws make it still difficult. Loss of family ties and connections to relatives have intensified the decline of migrants’ emotional wellbeing. It comes therefore as no surprise that one author accuses Germany of destroying families not only by making it difficult to receive entrance but also because of the lack of proper housing:

I arrived here with thousands of difficulties, you [Germany] set up mountains between me and my loved one. I intended to stay only a little and then return. But you closed my path so I got stuck here, oh Germany. Separation was hard to bear, so I said to myself, my wife should come. But you neither allowed her to come nor gave us a home. You aimed to separate us; that was your goal. How many families have you destroyed, oh Germany?

Since 2007, Germany made it a requirement for someone who has married his partner outside its borders, to demonstrate written and oral proficiency in German language in order to receive residency in Germany. The ruling government of that time introduced this bill to ease the integration of immigrants and restrict forced marriages. The law has been criticized ever since by migrant organizations and immigration lawyers claiming that German language courses can be required after the spouse has arrived in Germany which is much easier. The German government has been also accused for upholding this legal practice in order to keep out members of lower social classes and select higher trained immigrants. Furthermore, the critique involved that this regulation delayed family reunifications to an unknown time. Requiring language classes on German soil instead, would also help immigrants to bring them out of their isolation and step out from their closed family environment.

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111 S/Âye, 309; Çapacı, 346; Bibi, 314; Yön, 318; Çiloğlu, 326.
Naime Doğan, a woman from Turkey is married to a migrant who has been living in Germany since 1998. Although he has permanent residency, his wife Naime was denied an entrance visa in 2012 due to her lack of sufficient language skills. The woman who is illiterate complained at the higher European court of justice which decided in July 2014 that the German ruling conflicts with European law and must be abandoned. Despite the decision of the European court, German officials made clear that they will continue with this practice. According to them, the European court did not question the language requirements but only criticized the German government for not considering the extraordinary circumstances of the woman and allow an exception. Many Turkish migrant organizations have decided to challenge the German government again at the European commission.

In the year 2013, around 13000 spouses outside the country were not able to pass the language exam and hence were denied entrance to German soil. Many visa applicants face major obstacles to even enroll in a German language course. The high financial costs of courses, the enormous distance from the home to the language institution, disabilities, old age and illiteracy make it almost impossible for the visa applicants to succeed. The Netherlands and Austria – countries which also introduced such legal requirements – had to abandon their ruling on language requirements due to decisions of the European court of justice in 2011 and 2012 respectively.¹¹³

It is no secret that immigrants face more challenges in renting a proper apartment. A recent poll done on behalf of the German Federal Anti Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes) has shown that those who are from different ethnic origins will be more likely to experience discrimination and rejection when searching for housing. Moreover, almost half of those who were interviewed see disadvantages on the job market and in contact with law enforcement. On the job market, applicants are less likely to be invited for an interview only because their name sounds foreign. One third believes that non-Germans are discriminated in offices and agencies, in school and in gaining admittance to restaurants.114 Another study conducted in 2014 shows that despite an overall positive integration climate in Germany, people with an immigrant background are often not seen as a natural and equal part of society. The research also points out that those who strongly identify with Germany regard a Muslim identity as incompatible with being German.115

In terms of integration and naturalization of Muslim migrants, Germany has been very slow. According to numbers from 2011, only half of the community acquired German

http://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/brennpunkte_nt/article131154258/Sprachnachweise-beim-Ehegattennachzug-bleiben.html.
114 For more details see the official press release “Equal Opportunities. Always: Federal Anti Discrimination Agency Proclaims Year Against Racism / Poll: Housing discrimination seen as the top problem,” (Berlin: Federal Anti Discrimination Agency, April 2014), http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2014/Themenjahr%20gegen%20Rassismus%202014_20140407.html?nn=4194242>. It is important to mention that the agency was only established in 2006 after the new equality law (Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgeetz) was issued. Until then most incidents of discrimination remained mostly unreported to the state.
The fact that German naturalization laws have become gradually stricter has increased the problem. Migrants and host still experience the phenomenon of the temporary guest worker not fully at ease in Germany.

On other occasion, the migrants also address in their poems the severe issues of the growing far-right movement in Germany. Incidents of murdering Turkish immigrants by burning their homes are still very vivid in the collective memory of the migrant community as these lines demonstrate,

They claim to defend human rights, but their origins are obvious, their roots are obvious. Perhaps this is why they are so different from us. You have always discriminated against us, oh Germany. Some of them are Nazis, Nazis. When they see a foreigner, their faces cannot express a friendly smile. If they had the chance, they would burn us all. You have burnt so many innocent lives, oh Germany.

The burning of houses occupied by Turkish residents in Solingen or Mölln in the 1990’s has deeply affected German-Turkish relations over the last two decades. Five girls and women ranging in age from 4 to 27 were killed and three others died in the second attack. Another poem is entirely dedicated to this incident of burning immigrant homes carrying the title, *Almanya’da Yangınlar – Birbirini İzliyor. Savcılar ve Hâkimler – Yapanları Gizliyor* (“In Germany, the fires follow one after another. The lawyers and judges are hiding the criminals”). The title is suggestive of the overall mistrust of the Turkish migrant community towards German officials.

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116 Şule Toktaş, “Introduction: 50 Years of Emigration from Turkey to Germany,” 8.
117 Gökçe, 343.
They feel that the German government is not interested in protecting them against these crimes. On the contrary, many feel that the officials are complicit in these acts. Judicial processes are delayed, evidence is covered up and the truth is kept hidden from the public: “Do not cover it up – those criminals should receive their punishment.”

The writer calls on the Turkish migrant organizations to create a united front and challenge these injustices instead of being silent. There is certainly also a good portion of self-criticism evident in this poem which regards migrants as too passive. In another poem written by the same author, Turkey as the country of origin is called to act, organize collective protests and support its people. Such tragic incidents increase migrants’ feelings of being unwelcome and being despised. Some feel Germany is only full of hatred towards its immigrants.

In another instance, the writer reflects on the crimes committed by a neo-Nazi organization named National Socialist Underground (NSU). In 2011, the uncovering of killings again stirred the fear of racist violence in Germany and raised the question of how well state institutions protect German citizens with migrant backgrounds. Turkish Muslims feel therefore increasingly insecure in Germany. German officials first concluded wrongly that the people were murdered by Turks themselves and thought the crimes happened because of internal feuds among Turks fighting over the monopoly for selling drugs. However, new investigations led to the NSU group: “You try over and over to assign guilt [to Turks] – saying it was heroin or other

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123 Koordinationsrat der Muslime (KRM), NSU Rechtterror (Köln: Koordinationsrat der Muslime, 2012), 31.
drugs. You put all the burden [on the innocent victims] – because you have no brain. This is a racist attack – the Nazis come out of you.”

The poem _Almanya, Acı Vatan_ (“Germany, Painful Homeland”) states that if Germans would have now the chance to turn back the time, they would have denied all Turkish immigrants entrance to the country: “Germany, the painful homeland. From the outside it appears sweet. If they could turn back time, they would have turned us down from the door.”

One author concludes that these kinds of racist attitudes by some Germans have led in turn to hatred from Turks towards them. He calls on his fellow Turks not to remain silent in the face of crime and injustice because it can be anyone who can experience the same cruelty. The writer also refers to the silence of the media and its lack of reporting on these discriminatory incidents. While German media seems always very quick to focus on subjects dealing with Germans in Turkey, it does not show the same concern for its immigrant community, according to Sancak.

The poems under consideration also refer to the widespread problem of Islamophobia in Germany. One author expresses his frustration over the stereotypical depiction of Islam as backward and fanatical: “You [Germany] can do whatever you want but I will not turn away

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127 Sancak refers here to the case of Marco W., a young German man accused of sexually abusing a British girl while on vacation in Turkey. Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the issue personally with the Turkish government. Turkish officials have expressed frustration over what they have seen as an attempt to influence the judicial process. The German media paid major attention to Marco’s case. For more details, see “German Teen Suspected of Abuse Released from Turkish Prison,” _Deutsche Welle_, December 12, 2007, http://www.dw.de/german-teen-suspected-of-abuse-released-from-turkish-prison/a-3005286.
[from my religion]. You say that my religion is backward. Who do you think you are? Germany, I do not love you!”

To sum up, incidents of discrimination, xenophobia and Islamophobia in German society have raised questions about societal tolerance. Far-right political parties and neo-Nazi activity are on the rise. A representative study conducted by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in 2012 showed that day to day racism is highly prevalent in the midst of society across people from all educational backgrounds and that it is no longer a phenomenon of the periphery. In only eight days in August 2014, two mosques in Bielefeld and one in Berlin were targets of arson attacks. As the journalist Lenz Jacobsen has pointed out in his article, attacks on Muslims and their houses of worship are usually encountered with disinterest – an expression of the dangerously cold and distant relationship between Muslims and the larger society. The public reaction to burned synagogues or churches in Germany would have been very different. According to governmental figures, attacks on mosques have increased from an average of 22 yearly between 2001 and 2011 to 36 in the years 2012 and 2013. The public indifference and lack of solidarity remains unchanged. One reader comment asks: “Why should I shake the hands of those who constantly punch me?” referring to Muslims as violent, backward and fanatical as global news on terrorist groups like the “Islamic State” only prove very well.

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128 Fevza, 316: “Ne yapsanda ceviremezsin, Dinime yobazlik dersin, Sen kendini ne zannedersin, ALMANYA SENI SEVMIYORUM.”
129 Sule Toktaş, “Introduction: 50 Years of Emigration from Turkey to Germany,” 8.
In a survey of migration experts on the top ten migration issues of 2012, conducted by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in Washington, DC the number-three issue identified was the ongoing challenge of addressing the anti-immigrant rhetoric in Europe.\textsuperscript{132} As Meghan Benton and Anne Nielsen from the MPI state, “Muslim integration is one of the most contentious issues in the immigration debate in Europe, and one that gets right to the heart of public anxieties about immigration. European countries are grappling with ways to accommodate Muslim minorities while upholding national values.”\textsuperscript{133} According to Naika Foroutan, the harsh tenor of the German immigration debate can no longer be ignored.\textsuperscript{134} Amid the sudden emergence of movements for which Christianity is a mark of identity, Muslims are often treated as extremists, especially after the tragic events of 9/11. Populist parties are frequently using anti-Islamic propaganda to gain votes. This should come as no surprise, since 58.4% of Germans would like to limit Muslims’ constitutionally guaranteed right to religious freedom.\textsuperscript{135}

German public opinion includes some of the deepest anti-Muslim sentiments in Europe. According to a survey of the Bertelsmann Foundation, 57 percent of non-Muslims in Germany


\textsuperscript{134} See for example Naika Foroutan, Identity and (Muslim) Integration in Germany (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), 1, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/TCM-Germanycasestudy.pdf.

peceive Islam as being a threat to German society.\textsuperscript{136} Perceptions of Muslims as backward, fanatical, intolerant, and a threat to Germany’s national security and national identity are common. Much of this was obvious in Thilo Sarrazin’s controversial depiction of Muslims in his 2010 bestseller \textit{Deutschland schafft sich ab} (Germany does away with itself).\textsuperscript{137} In his book, Sarrazin discusses problems with the integration of immigrants which certainly need to be tackled. What caused an outcry among many migrant organizations and others, however, was his discussion of the inheritance of intelligence. In his book Sarrazin maintains that immigrant families cannot transfer intelligence towards their children. Such ideas on race theory made people remember the crimes committed by the Nazi soldiers. No surprise then that Sarrazin earned a lot of criticism for his views. With the overwhelming popularity of Sarrazin’s book and strong public support for his provocative ideas, many wonder if there isn’t an underlying xenophobia after all.

A survey conducted in 2008 by the major German newspaper \textit{Die Zeit} showed that every second Turkish Muslim still does not feel welcomed in Germany and that larger society is not accepting their distinctiveness. 78\% of Turkish Muslims said they do not accept Angela Merkel as their chancellor and one third of young Turkish academics raised and educated in Germany would like to return to Turkey.\textsuperscript{138} While these young people have never experienced physical


\textsuperscript{137} Thilo Sarrazin, \textit{Deutschland schafft sich ab} (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2010).

exile like their grandparents’ or parents’ generation, they rather live an interior form of exile – being somewhere and yet nowhere at the same time.

The content of these gurbet poems is equally mirrored in those Turkish folksongs which deal with migrant experiences and process life in gurbet. For the sake of avoiding repetition, I will not discuss the main issues outlined above. Ali Osman Öztürk observed in his research on 115 Turkish folksongs composed in Germany since 1972 that these Gurbet Türküleri (gurbet songs) were oral pioneers of a Turkish Gastarbeiter literature.139 Take for example popular songs like Gurbet Treni (Gurbet train) by the famous singer İbrahim Tatlıses or Ferdi Tayfur’s Almanya Treni (the train to Germany) or Gurbetçiler (the strangers) and Orhan Gencebay’s Gurbet – they all express the sorrowful and impatient longing of the migrants for their loved ones back home.140 One can argue that Turkish folk music has developed a whole separate repertoire on the notion of gurbet as the growing number of songs attests.141

The train carries deep symbolism marking the first departure of Turkish Muslims from Istanbul’s Sirkeci train station to Munich and was also called kara tren – black train. This is not only because it was in the color black but most importantly to articulate the sadness and despair one experienced at the moment of departure from one’s loved ones.142 Ferdi Tayfur’s piece

141 For a selection of popular gurbet songs see the search results on youtube by using the key word “gurbet.”
Almanya Treni (The train to Germany) says in the following: “The train to Germany leaves the station. Does the heart ever want to be separate from its loved one? I will not complain to destiny since God has written it down this way. Perhaps one day I will return, do not follow me.”143 In his other song, Gurbetçiler, Tayfur says in the first paragraph: “Painful days of yearning don’t know how to pass in the hands of gurbet (the strange land); even if you want to, the hearts full of sorrow won’t be silent; the gurbetçiler (the strangers) are longing for their mothers, fathers and siblings. Their loved ones endlessly waiting on the roads…”144

It is quite telling that today, 90% of Muslim migrants are still buried in their countries of origin. Special Muslim funeral agencies in Germany provide services for flying the bodies of the deceased back to Turkey. While German funeral regulations still make it difficult for Muslims to bury their dead in Germany, it is more the deep emotional connection with their native countries and the longing to be reunited at least in death with their beloved home which is the main reason for this state of affairs.145 Another reason is to know for certain that one’s death rites are performed in an islamically sound and healthy manner in a “true” Muslim environment. My own parents frequently express the same desire to make sure that their children know the importance that their bodies belong to and need to be returned to their native country. The idea that one has to buy an airplane ticket to visit one’s parents’ grave in Turkey is sometimes difficult to process.

for the younger generation as articulated by the famous German-Turkish author Mely Kiyak.\textsuperscript{146} Nazneen Ahmed demonstrates in her research on Muslim funeral rites in the United Kingdom how notions of belonging have been deeply interconnected with Muslim migrant experiences of death and mourning.\textsuperscript{147} To claim a certain space as a burial site implies that the person has come to accept this location as home. Ahmed examines Muslim attempts to acquire burial ground in the UK and comes to the conclusion that concepts of belonging and home shift over time as British Muslims of the present generation increasingly wish to be buried in the UK. However, as in the case of Germany on-going conflicts, tensions and negotiations between Muslim migrants and the receiving community on this issue are still a reality. Many social and legal obstacles in acquiring burial rights increase the sense that Muslim migrants still do not fully belong.

According to a representative poll conducted in 2009, 90\% of Turkish Muslims consider themselves as either “religious” or “very religious.”\textsuperscript{148} Religious identity is therefore a strong current within the migrant community and informs the values, attitudes and lifestyles of Muslims. Since the 1990’s it has been acknowledged that migrants have not only social and economic needs but also religious ones.\textsuperscript{149} The German government with its initiative of the German Islam Conference (\textit{Deutsche Islam Konferenz}) in September 2006 has only recently begun to consider the religious aspect more seriously when talking about a successful integration.

\textsuperscript{147} Nazneen Ahmed, “Marking a Good Death: Muslim Burial Sites and Practices in Britain from 1800 to Present,” in \textit{Rescripting Religion in the City}, 114.
\textsuperscript{148} Sonja Haug, Stephanie Müssig and Anja Stichs, \textit{Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland}, 305.
\textsuperscript{149} Rink, “Religion als innovatives Potenzial für Integration nutzen,” 6.
of Muslims. Until then, cooperation with Muslim organizations was largely dismissed. Despite this positive development, religion in this public debate still remains an object of the conversation not a resource for change.

This is unfortunate since, as Steffen Rink states, the positive role religion can play in integrating Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists has been established by numerous researches.\textsuperscript{150} It is therefore vital to bring in the theological and religious aspect into the public conversation on migration as many migrants still rely on the important resources of their Muslim faith.

As the foregoing assessment has made clear, some of the main challenges migrants face deal with notions of identity, belonging and alienation. Migration theologians have therefore devoted much of their creative thinking to these issues. It is for this reason that the subsequent treatment will turn to their Scriptural reading and engagement with these experiences.

Chapter 3 – Christian Theologies of Migration

Currently, the world is witnessing the impact of extensive mobility and “people on the move.” Considering this state of affairs, Christian theologians have begun to articulate constructive theologies of migration responsive to the needs of migrants. In his useful assessment of the emerging field of migration theology, Giacchino Campese observes that the growing body of literature in this field and the increasing number of conferences organized on this subject attest to the fact that contemporary migration has become the focus of theological reflection.151 This should not be surprising however. As the Bible makes evident, migration was never an alien concept to the Christian tradition. A simple glance of Scripture reveals that stories of people on the move are major elements of the text.152 The social realities around the globe have gradually compelled Christian theologians to incorporate migration into their systematic theological reflection and formulate constructive discourses centered on the needs of migrants and those who minister to them in their respective contexts.153

That believers draw on the important sources of their faith for how to respond to global issues is no secret. Religion informs not only the worldview of devout people but also their actions. This is for example evident in Susanna Snyder’s book Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church. It demonstrates the point that theological resources serve church communities as major reference when dealing with asylum seekers in the UK and with critical immigration and refugee

issues in North America. The faithful rely heavily on guidance perceived as rooted in the divine in order to be welcoming and embracing to newcomers.

In the following, I would like to review how Christian theologians utilize their faith resources in articulating theologies of migration. My aim is to analyze recent works in this field in order to identify foundational elements a constructive holistic theology of migration should entail. The examination of this ongoing and insightful Christian theological reflection will hence serve this study as a conceptual framework for formulating an Islamic theology of migration on the basis of the creation narratives in the Qur’an. This chapter will be equally helpful for discovering possible similarities and differences between the two traditions of Christianity and Islam when it comes to approaching a common global challenge like migration from a theological perspective. I do not claim to provide a complete overview of all Christian theological themes developed with regard to migration. My choice is rather selective and as such limited since I have focused only on those themes which are most frequently employed in developing theological reflections on migration. These themes can be therefore considered as the foundation for formulating a theological vision on migration.

3.1 Imago Dei – The Fundamental Dignity of Human Life

An examination of theological works on migration brings to the forefront the absolutely essential element of the imago Dei. This fundamental notion serves best to argue against the predominantly dehumanizing discourse on migrants. The imago Dei reminds people of the unshaken dignity of every human life. In quoting passages like Genesis 1:26-28, theologians

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make clear that the value of the human person can never be questioned. That Scripture is undeniably holding a sanctified view on human beings is clear through many other passages. The book of Genesis maintains the fundamental truth that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 5:1-3; 9:6; see also in the New Testament 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9). After the creation of humans, the Biblical text declares, “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Gen.1:31). For M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, the qualifier very and the seventh occurrence of the term good emphasize that human beings are the pinnacle of what God has created. Without going into the rich theological discourse on what it means to be created in the image of God, one aspect stresses that humans are created to be representatives of God in this world. They should act as his vicegerents (Gen. 1:26, 28). This stewardship requires an active attitude in caring with creativity and wisdom for the whole of the universe.

Daniel G. Groody enumerates several other reasons why the Imago Dei needs to be employed in the formulation of a theology of migration. The first aim is to deconstruct artificial categories which have been developed by people to classify migrants. Those can be of social, legal or political nature and neglect the real identity of human beings. Imago Dei shatters these labels and draws attention to the negative impact of such a demeaning terminology. It invites the public to critically evaluate the use of such language when talking about migrants. Terms such as Migrant, Ausländer (outlandish), Einwanderer (immigrant) are often used in the German

156 Rodas, Christians at the Border, 66.
157 Rodas, Christians at the Border, 67.
context. To problematize these labels is the goal of a migration theologian by pointing out how limited they are in the public discourse. They can never capture the full humanity of the person. As Groody points out, these terms do not simply serve as definitions but carry with them a whole range of perceptions and judgments. This is the reason why migration scholars reassess the use of such terminology.\textsuperscript{159} Groody alerts us to the “asymmetrical relationships such labels can generate leaving migrants vulnerable to control, manipulation and exploitation.”\textsuperscript{160} The careful use of language is absolutely necessary, as he warns us, since certain political descriptors can create new forms of “psychological colonization.”\textsuperscript{161}

Furthermore, as the state diet report of Rhineland-Palatine notes, general terms like \textit{migrants} are likely to ignore the diversity of this community presenting it as a homogenous group with identical values and lifestyles undergoing no change. Many migrants lament that they often feel stigmatized and discriminated when identified as such because these terms do not necessarily reflect their diverse realities of living in a pluralistic society.\textsuperscript{162} As Groody points out, labels artificially created to classify migrants can them even make feel more subjugated and vulnerable. The notion of \textit{imago Dei} instead upholds the real value and fundamental dignity of every person. Migrants feel empowered and self-confident.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{160} Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 3.
\textsuperscript{161} Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 3.
\textsuperscript{163} Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 4.
M. Daniel Carroll Rodas stresses that the *imago Dei* places important expectations on the migrant and the receiving community alike.\(^{164}\) The receiving side should recognize in the migrant the essential value and belief that newcomers can equally contribute to society with their skills and ideas. Rejecting this fundamental fact is rejecting the *imago Dei* and ultimately a violation against God. Often migrants are viewed from what Dana Wilbanks has criticized as the “utilitarian perspective” raising the question of whether newcomers are a “burden or benefit to society.”\(^{165}\) That immigrants tend to be viewed as a major burden for host communities is no secret. They are perceived as polluting the culture of the land simply because they belong to a different culture. Wilbanks says rightly that such an understanding “disrupts the ethos of settled communities and weaken the connective ties.” In the same vein, financial government support given to migrants is labeled as economic exploitation and waste. Lastly, migrants are also regarded as being politically disruptive. They do not respect the existence of borders, create turmoil and instability.\(^{166}\) While Wilbanks does not oppose considering the impact of migration, she claims that for Christians this should not be the starting point. Rather than approaching the subject from a utilitarian perspective, the *imago Dei* highlights the faithful to the fundamental dignity of migrants and the human interconnections through divine grace.\(^{167}\)

As Caroll Rodas reminds us, the important concept of the *imago Dei* also calls the migrant to accountability and responsible action. Migrants should be pro-active and creative

\(^{164}\) Rodas, *Christians at the Border*, 69.


\(^{166}\) Wilbanks, *Re-Creating America*, 95.

\(^{167}\) Wilbanks, *Re-Creating America*, 97.
citizens in their new environment. The ultimate goal needs to be to live up to their full potential. In much of the theological writing on migration we see that preference is given to the migrants’ plight as they are the most vulnerable in this process. They had to leave their native land, feel uprooted and disoriented. It comes therefore as no surprise that theologians focus on these marginal voices and call host communities to greater action. While these scholars deserve certainly credit for aligning themselves with vulnerable people on the move, the migrant has also important roles to fulfill. In the new environment, a theology of migration should ideally empower newcomers to be constructive participants in society. It remains crucial that they do their part in transforming communities into better ones. It is only by displaying such an active attitude that the God-given value and worth of human nature comes to its full fruition.

But there is more that the \emph{imago Dei} can illumine within migrants. They feel encouraged and are empowered after having reflected on their true nature. Not seldom many migrants go through feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. This is easy to understand when considering the lower socio-economic background of many and the lack of education. It is difficult and requires patience and perseverance to learn a new language or understand the different cultural customs. The daily lives of newcomers can therefore be most challenging. Such negative experiences can double the notion of estrangement. It is empirically verified that Turkish Muslims who largely belong to the lower socio-economic class are at higher risk for mental and physical illnesses.\footnote{Nazan Ulusoy and Elmar Gräßel, “Türkische Migranten in Deutschland: Wissens – und Versorgungsdefizite im Bereich häuslicher Pflege – ein Überblick,” \emph{Zeitschrift für Gerontologie und Geriatrie} 43.5 (2010): 332.} Migrant Muslim women are suffering increasingly more than the general
female population in Germany under psychosomatic distress.\textsuperscript{169} As Carroll Rodas explains, the \textit{imago Dei} shows migrants their true nature, worth and what they can accomplish. They should not feel less capable compared to settled people who have already positions. In fact, it is a greater challenge and accomplishment for someone to start from scratch and learn everything anew.\textsuperscript{170} God, as the \textit{imago Dei} teaches, has equipped every human being with skills and faculties and this is why they can certainly make their positive contribution to society.

Further expectations the \textit{imago Dei} places on the migrants, according to Carroll Rodas, is to remember that members of the new community are also created in the image of God. This includes not to be too critical of people and their customs. Sometimes migrants can even fall into a sort of rejectionism and isolate themselves completely from society. Such an attitude is only self-harming since it creates more hostility and estrangement between members living in the same society. As someone who grew up as a migrant child within the migrant community, I can testify to the tendency that some migrants display. They romanticize the culture of their former home or fall into an ethnic absolutism. Ingrid Mattson has termed this attitude broadly “a paradigm of resistance.”\textsuperscript{171} Paradigms of resistance informed by isolationist tendencies criticize the host country for its immoral, racist and materialist culture. As Carroll Rodas justly argues, to “display a defensive reaction to prejudice and discrimination by exalting one’s own culture over

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Nazan Ulusoy and Elmar Gräßel, “Türkische Migranten in Deutschland,” 331.}
\footnote{Rodas, \textit{Christians at the Border}, 69.}
\footnote{Ingrid Mattson, “How Muslims Use Islamic Paradigms to Define America,” in \textit{Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish and Muslim Experiences in the United States}, edited by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith and John L. Esposito (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 202.}
\end{footnotes}
another is to contradict what migrants themselves seek: appreciation for their abilities and for their different backgrounds.”

As we witness through the global climate, it is easier for goods to cross border than for human beings. Human bodies are often exploited for selfish economic reasons and their sanctity is not preserved. Therefore, the integrity of human life needs to be absolute priority before any other economic or political consideration. It is in this light that the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) states in its resolution on immigration, “Discussion of immigration and government immigration policy must begin with the truth that every human being is made in the image of God.”

3.2 The Pilgrim Principle

The second characteristic of a rounded theology of migration is to demonstrate that migrant identity is inherent to human nature. If it can be shown that all human beings are in possession of what Andrew F. Walls has called the “pilgrim principle,” then the distance between newcomers and host can probably be lessened. The othering of migrants might perhaps disappear when realizing that these people are simply reflecting the same nature. To be a migrant means to often find oneself as an “alien,” “sojourner,” “stranger,” or “resident alien” in

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172 Rodas, *Christians at the Border*, 70.
the midst of the new society. These descriptors are often used as translations of the term *gēr* – a noun which appears in the Old Testament referring to outsiders.¹⁷⁵

For the purposes of this study it might be useful to draw attention on the complexity of the term *gēr* and some of its terminological differences appearing in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Various translations of Exodus 23:9 in which the term *gēr* appears reveal that scriptural complexity. For example, the *New International Version*, the *New Living Version* and the *NET Bible* translate the term as “foreigner”: “Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.” Other translations such as the *New American Standard Bible*, the *King James Bible*, the *Jubilee Bible 2000* or *Webster’s Bible Translation* employ the term “stranger”: “You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.” In other instances, like in the *English Standard Version* and the *American Standard Version*, we find the word “sojourner” for *gēr*, “You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.” Interestingly, the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* translates *gēr* as “foreign resident” and the *International Standard Version* as “resident alien.”¹⁷⁶

The differences among these different English terms have relevance for our discussion – a sojourner is someone who is from outside and is staying for a while, with the expectation that the sojourner will eventually leave. In that regard, this definition would fit the early concept of

the *gastarbeiter*, while an alien is simply an “other” who may or may not be welcome in the host society. In his examination of the term “foreigner” in Hebrew and New Testament scriptures, E.J. Hamlin suggests that in the New Testament, “foreigner” is used, rarely, to refer to non-Jews. The reason for this rare use of the term as compared with the Old Testament is that foreigners who were sojourners or strangers could now become full members of the household of God, since the separating wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down (Eph. 2:11-19). This indicates that the foreigner/sojourner in New Testament theology could become a part of the host community but could not become a part of the host community in Hebrew scriptural theology.

Be it as it may, migrants reflect a set of fundamental truths about the meaning of human life. They embody the prophetic message that life is a journey towards God and that earthly resources are only finite in nature. Life is of vanishing nature and the blessings humans enjoy on earth should not be taken for granted as they are limited. As Gioacchino Campese explains, “migration theologians have rediscovered the migrant as a metaphor of the true Christian believer, who, even though he or she has a homeland, lives in it as though a foreigner and a stranger.” In this sense, one is called to affirm life as being on a journey, being a pilgrimage towards God who is the final goal.

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Campese reminds us in this context of some objections raised by some migrant communities. The long presence of Hispanic people in the United States, for example, is enough reason for this community not to embrace the term “immigrant” or “migrant” as self-identifier. Despite their long-standing membership in American society, they continue to be discriminated and marginalized and it is primarily through such classifications as “immigrant” that they are still labeled as outsiders. Naturally, there is a dislike of this term as it connotes more negativity. This is why Latino/a theologians like Allan Figueroa Deck claim that the “analogy of the immigrant” is not appropriate to use. Based on such categories, Hispanics continue to be marginalized as “perpetual strangers” despite the fact that they have been living here for decades. While Figueroa Deck’s reservations are important to consider, Campese directs our attention to the 11.1 million irregular migrants in the United States who mostly belong to the Hispanic community. Their needs cannot be disregarded and they still remain immigrants. Besides, from a theological standpoint it is absolutely essential not to dismiss the “pilgrim” aspect inherent to the Christian faith and for that the term “immigrant” contains a positive dimension.

Migration theologians have highlighted the pilgrim principle also by discussing the Biblical narratives of extensive movements. Divinely guided messengers and prophets find
themselves constantly in exile – physically or inwardly as being aliens to the dominant culture and practices. In this vein, Frank Crüsemann has demonstrated, that migration with its related human and spiritual matters it addresses, has been a core element of the biblical narrative from the beginning, “Indeed, from Abraham’s departure – and fundamentally even from Cain – to the child in the manger, in its main lines the Bible is a story of people who depart, set out in search of bread, land and protection, wander about and return.”184 This is articulated for instance in Deut 26:5, “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an immigrant.”

In referring to various Biblical passages, Christian theologians such as Margit Eckholt demonstrate that the migrant is a metaphor for the believer. Human beings in this sense are on a pilgrimage in this world towards God. Hence, a theology of migration needs to pay attention to the geographical movements outlined in Scripture.185 As Eckholt affirms, all great believers were on a journey: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and his sons, Prophet Elijah and Jesus of Nazareth himself were all migrants.186 Gen. 12:1 describes how God sanctions Abraham’s journey, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” The patriarch and his descendants lived a nomadic life, even in the

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184 Crüsemann, “‘You Know the Heart of a Stranger,’” 96.
185 Eckholt, “Auf der Reise,” 199.

Promised Land. Various passages in Genesis call the patriarchs “sojourners” or they are said to “sojourn” in an area for a time (Gen. 17:8; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4).\(^{187}\) The profound experiences of Israel are connected to migration. In Genesis 42-50, the reader follows Jacob’s journey to Egypt in search for food in a time of deprivation. As Carroll Rodas notes, “this itinerant experience so marked Israel’s identity that years later it became a part of the confession spoken by the head of the household when presenting the first fruits of the harvest to God” (Deut. 26:5; Ps. 39:12).\(^{188}\)

Jesus’ life epitomizes the human journey to God. He identifies with the plight of migrants since he himself had to flee and was wandering all the time. His mother gave birth to him on the road and he had to leave his native country to find refuge in Egypt (Mt 2:13-23). Listening to God’s order, he settles in Nazareth making it again impossible to return home. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us that Jesus showed compassion to vulnerable people on the move. It is showing solidarity with the “least” and the stranger in form of hospitality that ultimately becomes a measure for judging someone to be a follower of Christ or not (Mt 25:35). The New Testament narrates the story of Jesus’ life as being a constant itinerant who can settle nowhere (Lk 9:58). He has to leave his loved ones behind, his lands and possessions (Mk 10:28-31). Jesus’ ministry can aptly be described as a journey to a homeland which does not exist on earth (Lk 9:51).\(^{189}\)

\(^{187}\) Rodas, *Christians at the Border*, 73.

\(^{188}\) Rodas, *Christians at the Border*, 73.

It is by highlighting these biblical narratives that migration theologians hope to remind people of their migratory nature – an element that seems to be forgotten and entirely neglected. This condition is well articulated in the words of biblical scholar Carmine Di Sante claiming that “alienation does not consist in being a stranger but in having forgotten that one is a stranger, and that God is God precisely because God does not allow this suppression of awareness to happen; namely, the illusion that those who live outside their homeland are already at home without having to seek it anymore.”\(^{190}\) A theology of migration also aims to awaken the migrant to continue on an inner journey after arrival in a new place and not to fall into illusion that one can forever settle in this world. The true home is yet to come. As Donald Senior states adequately, the migrant experience helps us to reassess the wrong idea that the world’s resources are endless. It’s delusional to believe that a nation’s claim to absolute sovereignty stands above the dignity of the human migrant. A country’s progress is also measured by its moral advancement which includes its treatment of immigrants. Further, the migrant experience shatters the wrong tendency of human beings to simply focus on their own individual satisfaction.\(^{191}\) The physical journey should ideally reinforce the notion of being on the spiritual path towards God.

3.3 Eschatological Reflections

As already pointed out, closely intertwined with the “pilgrim principle” are theological reflections on the ultimate return to the heavenly home. The migrant then reminds the members of the host community of their own fundamental identity and final destination. A number of

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\(^{191}\) Senior, “Beloved Aliens and Exiles,” 29.
theologians, who have offered reflections on migration, emphasize this eschatological aspect.\textsuperscript{192} The eschatological dimension emphasizes once more that all believers are strangers in this world. They are itinerants on a journey towards God and their ultimate heavenly home. Their citizenship is a heavenly one and it is this aspect which finds a permanent place in migration theology. In this respect, the famous \textit{Letter to Diognetus} written in the second or third century by an unknown Christian to an equally unknown questioner is frequently referenced.\textsuperscript{193} This letter is important because it provides us an ideal picture of Christian self-consciousness and how one is to understand identity from a theological angle:

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[...\text{They live in their own countries but only as aliens [paroikoi]. They have a share in everything as citizens [politai], and endure everything as foreigners [xenoi]. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land [...] They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven [...] To put it simply: What the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but does not belong to the body, and Christians dwell in the world but do not belong to the world...}]
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Theologian Donald Senior explains that such Christian self-consciousness is also apparent in the New Testament. Scripture makes clear that the faithful are living in a kind of exile in this world and will always yearn for their celestial home.\textsuperscript{195} The letters to the Hebrews declares, “They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{192} See for instance Rodas, \textit{Christians at the Border}, 127; Min, “Migration and Christian Hope,” 196.
\item\textsuperscript{193} See for instance Phan, “Migration in the Patristic Era,” 55-56; Zevola, “‘What are you talking about to each other as you walk along?’ (Lk. 24:17),” 95.
\item\textsuperscript{195} Senior, “Beloved Aliens and Exiles,” 28.
\end{itemize}
speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb 11:13-15).

As Senior rightly alerts, believers need to be careful to maintain a delicate balance in preserving the importance of both worlds. People of faith still need to do their share for society and not neglect working for this earthly life while anticipating the heavenly home. He sees such warning also echoed in the Gospel of Mark which makes mention of “false prophets” who are quick in pointing to the end of times. By that they take away the importance of preaching the good news around the world (Mk 13:5-10, 21-23).196 This is why it is important to understand this vision from a holistic perspective of faith. To be in exile, a spiritual migrant or a stranger (i.e. the Greek terms parepidemos [stranger, alien] in the First Epistle of Peter in 1:1 and paroikia in 2:11 [literally, one not at home] should not lead a believer to a quietist or isolationist attitude. The faithful should still do their share in this world while being focused on their journey towards heaven.197 Leading New Testament scholar Nicholas Thomas Wright has also alluded to this aspect in his work Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church. In that he argues, that the eschatological vision of the Gospel needs to be properly understood so that a Christian remains a pro-active and constructive citizen in this world while not dismissing the afterlife. An escapist attitude is far from being promoted by the Bible.198

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3.4 Transcending Humanly Constructed Boundaries

Inextricably linked to this understanding is the next characteristic of a theology of migration, namely to transcend humanly constructed boundaries. Theologies of migration would like to draw attention to the relativity of national borders. Countries have the right to secure and control their territories but the human being cannot be seen as inferior to these artificial lines. There can be therefore no absolute claim to preserve borders. In the same vein, the diversity of the human family is acknowledged but such pluralism cannot become a divisive factor among humanity. Instead, God’s embrace of all humankind needs to be reflected in the legal and political processes of border preservation.

For David Hollenbach the notion of *imago Dei* fundamentally questions these artificially drawn lines between nations and provides the foundation for what he terms a “Christian cosmopolitanism.”\(^{199}\) All human beings share the common connection of being created in the image of God. They each are dignified and valued. Humanity’s common value transcends all boundaries, national and ethnic divides. In light of such cosmopolitanism, countries should be welcoming and not exclude selectively certain individuals or groups in front of their borders. The *imago Dei* elevates every human being to a high status – one which is superior to the right of borders. More importantly, “Christian cosmopolitanism challenges the moral significance of borders and seeks to reduce or perhaps eliminate their political significance as well.”\(^{200}\) In citing Acts 17:26, Hollenbach maintains that God embraces the human race as a whole: “From one single stock [God]…created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth.”

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\(^{199}\) Hollenbach, “Migration as a Challenge to Theological Ethics,” 808.

\(^{200}\) Hollenbach, “Migration as a Challenge to Theological Ethics,” 808.
According to him, there is only one human family in which no strangers exist. They share a strong kinship. Considering God’s will in creating such human diversity, an exclusion of the foreigner runs counter to the divine moral project. If the biblical passage above asserts that humankind can occupy the entire earth than their right to move freely on this planet is likewise affirmed.\textsuperscript{201}

Nonetheless, as Hollenbach explains, “Christian cosmopolitanism” does recognize the positive impact of national borders. The dignity and well-being of people can be preserved through the existence of borders. The emphasis on the common origin of all people should not take away from their individual distinctiveness. With the preservation of boundaries, interventions of one national entity to another can be avoided. The issue of colonization is a case in point. To respect the difference within creation is to respect their right for self-expression as Hollenbach alludes. It is in this respect that the positive value of borders can be affirmed.\textsuperscript{202} In drawing on Israel’s special covenant with God and the universal covenant with all creation (Gen. 9:1-17), Hollenbach emphasizes the scriptural value of maintaining both the particular right to national self-determination and the global duty to migrants. The liberation of Israel from Egypt puts a special duty on the Jewish people how to treat strangers and aliens in their own territory, “You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 23:9; see Lev. 19:33-34).\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{201} Hollenbach, “ Migration as a Challenge to Theological Ethics,” 808-809.
\textsuperscript{202} Hollenbach, “ Migration as a Challenge to Theological Ethics,” 809.
\textsuperscript{203} Hollenbach, “ Migration as a Challenge to Theological Ethics,” 809.
More often than not however, immigrants tend to be excluded based on national, ethnic, economic or political factors. Sometimes certain groups claim superiority over migrant people – an approach which reflects only arrogance and pride. It is to this culture of rejection and egotism to which theologies of migration have drawn attention. In this sense, theologians take it upon themselves to unveil such destructive human behaviors. As Carroll Rodas reminds us, such rejectionist or arrogant behavior can be practiced on both sides of the migration discourse. Ironically, the same wrong attitudes can also be found among the immigrant population. Often, one’s own native culture back home is deemed as superior to that of the host community. This occurs mostly as a negative response to discrimination and exclusion migrants face. This, however, should not be the reaction a migrant should display since it is the very wrong position migrants criticize themselves.

3.5 Welcoming the Stranger – Radical Hospitality

What has been additionally emphasized throughout the theological thinking on migration is the strong virtue of hospitality. This theme appears therefore in many writings aiming to formulate a theology of migration. Hospitality as a Christian virtue has been central within the

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theologies of migration and is highlighted by the example and practice of Jesus who expressed it most profoundly in the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” as read also in the Hebrew Scriptures in Leviticus 19:18. And further in Leviticus 19:33, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” The biblical tradition of radical hospitality exhorts the person of faith to give shelter to strangers in need.

The Sanctuary movement of the 1980s is one case in point of how this theological repertoire inspired action. As has been shown by Ananda Rose in her work _Showdown in the Sonoran Desert: Religion, Law and the Immigration Controversy_, the tradition of radical hospitality motivated many Christian congregations to offer refuge to people on the move. This element went hand in hand with the belief that every human being is created in the image of God and the great commandment to love the neighbor as yourself. Hospitality is only the natural outcome of such convictions. This was what motivated Christians to express “civil disobedience.” At the end obedience to God trumped obedience to the government. The Sanctuary movement came into being when Central American refugees asked church leaders to help them during the difficult process of seeking asylum. Since the political climate at that time did not allow some groups to apply for asylum, churches stepped in to help those in need. They

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205 Rose, _Showdown in the Sonoran Desert_, 32.
206 Rose, _Showdown in the Sonoran Desert_, 22.
did so in defiance of the established law.\textsuperscript{207} Many members of the Sanctuary movement based their actions on biblical passages like Numbers 35:11,

> The Lord spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the Israelites, and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, so that a slayer who kills a person without intent may flee there. Then cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, so that the slayer may not die until there is a trial before the congregation.

Relevant to the migration discussion is the Greek term “xenos” (foreigner or stranger) which appears in the Gospel of Matthew (25:35, 38, 43 and 44). As Caroll Rodas points out, other adjectives appearing in connection with the term “xenos” are the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned.\textsuperscript{208} Being powerless and vulnerable the stranger embodies Jesus’ presence, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me” (Matt. 25:35). Such biblical injunctions invite the believer to embrace the stranger. As James Keenan summarizes the essence of scriptural hospitality, “the host must understand the perspective of the alien.”\textsuperscript{209} Through the example of Jesus’ life the faithful learn what caring for the stranger entails. As the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37) and the Last Judgment (Mt. 25: 31-46) tells us, love of neighbor and just living are elements of caring for the newcomer. Rivera-Pagán terms the concept comprising hospitality, love, and care for the stranger “xenophilia.”\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{207} Rose, \textit{Showdown in the Sonoran Desert}, 31.
\textsuperscript{208} Rodas, \textit{Christians at the Border}, 122.
\textsuperscript{209} Keenan, “Jesuit Hospitality,” 234.
\textsuperscript{210} Rivera-Pagán, “Xenophilia or Xenophobia,” 44.
Radical hospitality is also to internalize that it is God Himself who has shown utmost hospitality to all human beings during their temporary dwelling on earth – providing them in His mercy and compassion with sufficient resources, food, shelter, the skills and faculties needed to acquire a comfortable stay. Human beings as vicegerents of God are therefore called to display such divine qualities to others in need.

The previous assessment of the Biblical material showed how central the issue of migration is to Scripture and how strong of a characteristic it is to the lives of the faithful. It is by no means an exhaustive treatment of all the relevant references concerning migration and did not provide an in-depth discussion of these passages. Theologians like Luis N. Rivera-Pagán have pointed to the problem that is evident in some evangelically oriented books such as Welcoming the Stranger or Christians at the Border. They employ a hermeneutical strategy which, as he phrases it, “completely and intentionally ignores those biblical texts that might have xenophobic connotations.” As he points out, Scripture can sometimes present contradictory notions and therefore lead to some irritation. His point is well taken and to deal with these tensions will remain a constant challenge within the field of Scriptural studies. These questions cannot be solved here given the confines of this study. It becomes obvious however that the Bible is rich enough to engage with contemporary migration experiences and to provide important theological resources in how to approach related issues.

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211 Soerens et al. Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate.
212 Rodas, Christians at the Border.
213 Rivera-Pagán, “Xenophilia or Xenophobia,” 41.
214 Rivera-Pagán, “Xenophilia or Xenophobia,” 41.
Christian theologies of migration teach that migration is a universal phenomenon in human history. Anselm Kyongsuk Min remarks that there is not a lack of *agendas* but *agents* to solve these global issues. The focus therefore needs to raise informed people with grounded ethics and morals who are able to engage with contemporary migration. In this regard, theologies of migration attempt to change the attitudes, loyalties and perspectives of migrants and host into the positive direction. These Biblical accounts can inform the understanding of migrant and receiving communities alike. With respect to the latter, the text alerts the reader to be more sensitive to the challenges of the migrant population and invite them to show greater solidarity with those newcomers. For the former, it is to rediscover the migrant aspect as an integral part of their faith journey.

Theologies of migration remind the faithful that such mass movement of people happens under the direction of God who is constantly involved with His creation. The migrant can therefore approach the experience of migration from a more positive angle and display a more pro-active attitude in their surrounding. As Donald Senior notes on the experiences of early Christian communities with displacement, they “are not only a cause of suffering and discontinuity but, paradoxically, also yield important insight into the experience of faith.”

It is in light of these considerations, that the present study aims to demonstrate how the qur’anic narratives of Adam and Eve can employ these elements in order to construct a rounded Islamic theology. As noted in the beginning, contemporary Islamic discourse has not developed yet a structured theological reflection on contemporary migration and its related issues despite

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the available resources. This work will also explore other nuances apparent in the story and might also draw out parallels or differences between the Christian and Islamic tradition.
Chapter 4 - The Ur-Migrants: The Qur’anic Narratives of Adam and Eve

The story of Adam and Eve is a rich and popular one and has been considered from various angles. As Daniel Carl Peterson explains, creation stories fulfill among others the important function to provide wisdom and meaning in understanding the challenges humankind faces.\textsuperscript{217} The Qur’anic narratives of Adam and Eve provide therefore a good lens to analyze the human experience of contemporary migration. The downward primordial move from heaven to earth contains intricacies alluding to our current age of massive human movement and mobility.

The Qur’anic narrative moves from 1) human creation to 2) human alienation, and finally to 3) the question of human destiny. The subsequent analysis follows the order of events as provided by the Qur’anic text. I will examine following incidents: God’s announcement of the intention to assign a vicegerent on earth – the objection of the angels – the act of creation – teaching Adam the names – the divine command to bow down and Iblīs’ refusal – dwelling in the garden and eating from the forbidden tree – descent to earth and return to the heavenly home.

I shall only identify elements in the narrative which are relevant to the human experience of contemporary migration. I will draw on other Qur’anic verses to elaborate on the aspects contained in the narrative.

Where useful, I will consult Qur’an commentaries – classical or modern – to expand on the significant points mentioned and to see whether the themes of interest have been treated by the exegetical tradition. That way the \textit{tafsīr} literature will serve as a control mechanism for my own migrant reading of the Qur’an. It will assist me to see whether what I am claiming to detect

in the Qur’an text is completely new, or whether the interpretive community has noticed something similar before.

One contemporary tafsīr work to which I will turn to for consultation is Said Nursi’s (1876-1960) Risale-i Nur (Epistles of Light). This particular collection published in Ottoman Turkish has not been engaged significantly compared to other Arabic exegetical works, and offers new pathways for exploration. It is noteworthy that it has been so far the only exegesis translated from Turkish into the Arabic language and is in addition one of the most widely read commentaries in Turkey and in the Turkish Muslim diaspora, along with the famous tafsīr of Qur’an commentator Muhammed Hamdi Yazır (1878-1942). In general, Ottoman or Turkish Qur’an commentaries have not received much attention by scholars thus far and this work is a small contribution to an area which will still need further investigation.

I seek to demonstrate that the qur’anic story of Adam and Eve is sufficiently rich and complex to contain the contours for shaping a rounded Islamic theology of migration. With respect to that, I derive some possible implications for Muslims whether they are migrants or the receiving community.

Adam is the first man and prophet, mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur’an of which seven occurrences are in the phrase “children of Adam” (banī ādam). In Muslim

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218 See for instance Q 3:33, “God chose Adam, Noah, Abraham’s family, and the family of ‘Imran, over all other people,” Q 3:59, “In God’s eyes Jesus is just like Adam: He created him from dust, said to him, ‘Be,’ and he was,” or Q 19:58, “These were the prophets God blessed – from the seed of Adam, of those We carried in the Ark with Noah, from the seed of Abraham and Israel – and those We guided and chose. When the revelations of the Lord of Mercy were recited to them, they fell to their knees and wept.”

219 See for example Q 7:26, “Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you; the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all garments – this is one of God’s signs, so that people may take heed,” Q 17:70, “We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We
tradition Adam is considered to be the father of humankind (abū al-bashar). As has been the case with other prophetic narratives in the Qur’an, the creation story is not located in one specific chapter. Instead, the events of this drama are repeated seven times in different suras with varying emphases. However, there are also other references to the creation of the human beyond these seven. Each version contributes to building up a picture of the relationship between God and humanity. These seven qur’anic instances – Q 2:30-39, Q 7:10-27, Q 15:26-43, Q 17:61-65, Q 20:115-124, Q 38:71-85, Q 18:50 – will hence be the departure point for the following examination. The nuances appearing in these passages are important as they will offer more insight into our discussion on contemporary migration issues.

4.1 Divine Annunciation

When your Lord (rabbuka) told the angels, ‘Indeed (innī), I am putting (jāʿilun) a vicegerent (khalīfa) on earth,’ they said, ‘How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?’ but He said, ‘Indeed (innī), I know things you do not.’ (Q 2:30)

When your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed (innī), I will create (khāliqu) a human (basharan) out of dried clay, formed from dark mud.” (Q 15:28)

When your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed (innī), I will create (khāliqu) a human from clay.” (Q 38:71)

In the bound qur’anic corpus (muṣḥaf) the reader first encounters the narrative of Adam and his spouse in surat al-Baqara. As Whitney S. Bodman notes, Qur’an commentators have

have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created,” or Q 36:60, “Children of Adam, did I not command you not to serve Satan, for he was your sworn enemy.”
directed most of their interest to this particular account since it appears first.\textsuperscript{220} The account begins with the divine annunciation of an intention to place a \textit{khalīfa} on earth.\textsuperscript{221} Q 2:30 reads, “When your Lord (\textit{rabbuka}) told the angels, ‘Indeed (\textit{innī}), I am putting (\textit{jāʿilun}) a vicegerent (\textit{khalīfa}) on earth,’ they said, ‘How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?’ but He said, ‘Indeed (\textit{innī}), I know what you do not know.’” Four main points in this instance of divine proclamation deserve attention here: first, the heavenly and earthly location indicated in the narrative; second, the personal divine involvement in the act of creation, third the notion of vicegerency and finally, the objection of the angels. I would like to expand on each of these points and identify their relevance for a migration theology.

\subsection{4.1.1 Heavens and Earth}

With regard to the first matter, the cosmic drama plays out in primordial time and in an extraterrestrial realm. The heavenly council of angels is not indifferent to what is going to happen on earth. On the contrary, they show a real concern. While the dialogue between God and the angels occurs in a celestial dimension, Adam’s terrestrial connection is established from the very beginning by divine appointment – Adam will be placed on earth, though he is created in heaven. His origin is heavenly, his task will be carried out on an earthly location and his return will be ultimately back to the beginning, as outlined in the other parts of the Qur’anic narratives.


\textsuperscript{221} Translations for the term \textit{khalīfa} differ: vicegerent, viceregent, viceroy, deputy, trustee or successor are used in various Qur’an editions. For the sake of consistency I will use the word “vicegerent” throughout this study.
The heavenly and earthly connection here is worthwhile to explore. It will help us to examine qur’anic notions of human identity in light of the scriptural treatment of geography, territory and borders. Does the Qur’an presume a sharp distinction between the earthly world of jinn and humans on the one hand and the heavenly world of angels and God on the other?

A cursory reading of the Qur’an reveals that God’s power embraces the heavens and the earth. He is the “creator (badī’) of the heavens and the earth (al- samāwāt wa-l-ard).” These passages emphasize that God is the creator of all things — the lowest, the highest and all that is in between. As Q 38:27 states, “It was not without purpose that We created the heavens and the earth and everything in between. That may be what the disbelievers assume — how they will suffer from the Fire.” In other passages God is referred to as the “Lord of the heavens and the earth” (rabb al- samāwāt wa-l-ard).

The Qur’an mentions heaven and sky 120 times in the singular (al-samā) and 190 times in the plural (al-samawāt). According to Q 21:30, the heavens and the earth were a “joined entity” (ratqan) which God separated, “Are the disbelievers not aware that the heavens and the earth used to be joined together and that We ripped them apart, that We made every living thing

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222 See for instance Q 2:117, “He is the Originator (badī’) of the heavens and the earth, and when He decrees something, He says only ‘Be,’ and it is” or Q 6:101, “The Creator (badī’) of the heavens and earth! How could He have children when He has no spouse, when He created all things, and has full knowledge of all things?”

223 See for example Q 13:16, “Say, ‘Who is Lord of the heavens and the earth?’ Say, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Why do you take protectors other than Him, who can neither benefit nor harm even themselves?’ Say, ‘Are the blind equal to those who can see? And are the depth of darkness equal to the light?’ Have the partners they assign to God created anything like His creation so that their creation is indistinguishable from His? Say, ‘God is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the All Compelling.’” Q 17:102, “He said, ‘You know very well that only the Lord of the heavens and earth could have sent these signs as clear proof. I think that you, Pharaoh, are doomed.’” Or Q 18:14, “We gave strength to their hearts when they stood up and said, ‘Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth. We shall never call upon any god other than Him, for that would be an outrageous thing to do.’


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from water? Will they not believe?” Interestingly, creation by separation is a strong theme in Genesis 1. God separates light from darkness, day from night, earth from sea, the waters above from the waters below. God’s throne (kursī) is so all-encompassing that it expands over the heavens and the earth. Several passages like Q 15:16-18, Q 25:61 or Q 41:12 describe stars as being adornments of the lower heaven. To keep demons in distance and away from the heavenly population, meteors are given the function of missilies, as Q 67:5 says, “We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them [missiles] for stoning devils for whom We have also prepared the torment of a blazing fire.” This stoning is meant to secure the heavenly realm from demons who are eager to listen to the heavenly council. The demons seek to share the secrets of the heavens with certain individuals on earth. As Q 26:221-223 describes, “Shall I tell you who the jinn come down to? They come down to every lying sinner who readily lends and ear to them, and most of them are liars.” It is the heavens which makes plants and vegetables on the earth grow through rain. The heavens are also the origin of divine revelations which were sent to humanity through angelic messengers. These angels join also in human battles and

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225 Jarrar, “Heaven and Sky,” 411. See Q 2:255, “God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His leave? He know what is before them and what is behind them, but they do not comprehend any of His knowledge except what He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; it does not weary Him to preserve them both. He is the Most High, the Tremendous.”

226 Jarrar, “Heaven and Sky,” 411. See Q 15:16-18, “We have set constellations up in the sky and made it beautiful for all to see, and guarded it from every pelted satan: any eavesdropper will be pursued by a clearly visible flame” Q 25:61, “Exalted is He who put constellations in the heavens, a radiant light, and an illuminating moon,” or Q 41:12, “And in two Days He formed seven heavens, and instilled into each its function. We have made the nearest one beautifully illuminated and secure. Such is the design of the Almighty, the All Knowing.”


defeat the evil parties.\footnote{Jarrar, “Heaven and Sky,” 412. See also Q 3:124-126, “Remember when you said to the believers, ‘Will you be satisfied if your Lord reinforces you by sending down three thousand angels? Well, if you are steadfast and mindful of God, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand sopping angels if the enemy should suddenly attack you!’ and God arranged it so, as a message of hope for you [believers] to put your hearts at rest – helps comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise.”} The Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition convey that angels also pray for the forgiveness of the faithful.\footnote{Q 4:7-9, “Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those who surround it celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him. They beg forgiveness for the believers: ‘Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge so forgive those who turn to You and follow Your path. Save them from the pains of hell and admit them, Lord, to the lasting Gardens You have promised to them, together with their righteous ancestors, spouses, and offspring: You alone are the Almighty, the All Wise. Protect them from all evil deeds: those You protect on that Day from [the punishment for] evil deeds will receive Your mercy – that is the supreme triumph.”} Q 55:33 clarifies that without God’s permission, however, there is no possibility for human beings to join the heavenly population, “Jinn and humankind, if you can pass beyond the regions of heaven and earth, then do so: you will not pass without Our authority.”\footnote{Jarrar, “Heaven and Sky,” 412.} Following Qur’anic teachings, Said Nursi states in his commentary that the famous night journey (miʿrāj) of the Prophet Muhammad from earth to the heavens also demonstrates that messengers have been able to travel to the heavenly realms.\footnote{Said Nursi, Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı, Vol.1 (Istanbul: Nesil Publications, 1996), 253.} As these accounts signify, a strict division between the heavenly and earthly realm is not the issue here. Instead, the Qur’an points its audience’s vision to both of these two realms.

With regard to Adam’s divinely appointed location – the earth (al-ʾarḍ) – its importance is equally well-established by the Qur’an referring to it in 461 instances.\footnote{Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage, edited by Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (Leiden, Brill 2008).} A close reading of the Qur’an reveals that it pays little attention to geographical details or the question of people’s territorial origin. The famous verse of Q 49:13 maintains gender and tribal identities but does not link them directly to a specific and concrete geography, “People, We created you all from a
single man and a single woman, and made you into races (shuʿūban) and tribes (qabāʾ il) so that you should get to know one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.” As stated in the latter part of the verse, the core of identity is taqwa – piety and devotion. Another verse, Q 30:22, stresses the diversity in creation as reflected through the variety of languages and races. They are considered to be among God’s signs, “Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know.”

Said Nursi portrays the qur’anic pair of “the heavens and the earth” as connected to one another like two countries under a single government. In his Fifteenth Word he goes on to say that important transactions and relations take place between them. God sends light, heat, blessings and mercy in the form of rain – in short, all things necessary for the earth from heaven. Basing his views on the argument of authority by referring to the consensus of revealed religions, the angels and spirit beings (ervah) descend to the earth from the heavens (semâ). While this is possible for these luminous beings, it is not impossible for humans to ascend to the heavens:

Indeed, everyone’s mind, imagination, and gaze perpetually rise to the heavens. So too, having discarded all heaviness do the spirits of the prophets (ervah-i enbiya) and saints rise there with God’s permission, and having stripped off their bodies, the spirits of the dead. Since those who become light and subtle rise to the heavens, for sure, one sort of the inhabitants of the earth and the air who are clothed in what resembles a body and are light and subtle like spirits may rise there.

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236 Nursi, Sözler, 249-250.
It is undeniable that human beings have always had a strong desire to reach up to the heavens and search for what is beyond the mere earthly dimension. The belief in supernatural beings or the search for extraterrestrial life remained always a strong feature in human history and would, at least from Nursi’s perspective, be taken as evidence that human beings through their inner desire and longing for such beings confirm the existence of the heavenly realm.

Nursi goes on to explain why the Qur’an mentions the heavens in the plural but the earth in the singular as seen in *rabb al-ʾsamāwāt wa-l-ʾard* or *bādīʾ al-ʾsamāwāt wa-l-ʾard* (Lord or Creator of the heavens and the earth) and at the same time puts them on equal rank,

The silence and tranquility of the heavens, and their order and regularity, and vastness and luminosity, show that their inhabitants (i.e., the angels and heavenly spirit beings) are not like those of the earth; they are obedient, they do whatever they are commanded. Because the country is vast there is nothing to cause overcrowding and disputes. Their natures are pure, they are innocent, their stations are fixed.²³⁷

However this does not hold true for the earth which is a place of opposites coming together. Evils are mixed with good, and disputes start between them. Such a gathering of contrasting natures results then in conflict and suffering. And from these spiritual clashes, examination and competition are set and ultimately progress (*terakkiyat*) and retrogression (*tedenniyat*) are born. Nursi states further,

Despite its small size, the globe of the earth may be thought of as equal to the heavens, for it may be said that ‘a constant spring is greater than a lake with no inlet.’ […] God Almighty has created it (the earth) as a place for exhibiting His art, a place where His creativity is concentrated, as a pivot of His wisdom, a place for the manifestation of His power, a garden of His mercy, a field for His Paradise, the measure for uncountable universes and worlds of creatures, and like

²³⁷ Nursi, *Sözler*, 250.
a spring flowing into the seas of the past and the World of the Unseen [...] You will see that even if the earth does not weigh more than the heavens, it does not weigh less either.\textsuperscript{238}

Q 2:30 does not specify a certain location for Adam but simply denotes that the entire space is assigned to humankind. Angelika Neuwirth points out, that the Qur’an, in contrast to ancient Arabic poetry, is not concerned with topographical details.\textsuperscript{239} She says that there are very few exceptions which are mostly late. In Q 48:24 the city of Mecca is named once but appears in Q 52:4 as al-bayt al-ma’mūr which refers to the Ka’ba. Q 2:144 identifies the Ka’ba and its vicinity as al-masjid al-ḥarām. Q 47:13 refers to the location of the sacred shrine as qaryatuka or qaryatukum and presents it as a native town to its listeners, as Neuwirth points out.\textsuperscript{240} In Q 6:92 umm al- qurā Mecca is presented as the ultimate city. The famous hills of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa which are visited during the pilgrimage appear in Q 2:158. Q 33:13 also mentions Yathrib as location.\textsuperscript{241} Neuwirth thinks that,

the striking scarcity of place names may be explained by the fact that real social space is perceived during the early Meccan periods less from an empirical viewpoint, as a stage for worldly human interaction, than from an eschatological perspective, as a multiply-staged forum of debate where divine truth should emerge victorious. It is only later, in Medinan times that places turn into territories that need to be controlled and must thus be marked by unambiguous names. Changing notions of space, therefore, can be taken as milestones in the qur’ānic canonical process.\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{238} Nursi, Sözler, 251.
\textsuperscript{239} Neuwirth, “Geography,” in Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān, Vol.2, 299.
\textsuperscript{240} Neuwirth, “Geography,” 299.
\textsuperscript{241} Neuwirth, “Geography,” 300.
\textsuperscript{242} Neuwirth, “Geography,” 300.
Her statement also confirms the Qur’an’s depiction of the interconnected nature of the heavens and the earth. The importance of the worldly realm cannot be underestimated since it determines the state of the believer in the afterlife. Again, piety and devotion are key in relating to both of these worlds.

There seems to be a tendency within Muslim tradition to assign more value to a certain space than the Qur’an itself does to the same degree. It is for example quite telling that Egypt (miṣr) is with five instances the “most frequently mentioned city or country in the Qur’an.”243 Some exegetes however increase this number to 28 arguing that Egypt is mentioned many more times directly and in more subtle ways.244 Still, compared to the overall word qur’anic word count this is not much. That only underlines the fact that the Qur’an has little interest in geographical details. Unlike the Qur’an we can discover in other Islamic literary writings a great emphasis on Egypt including many details. This is for instance the case in Qur’an commentaries, ḥadīth collections, the sīra literature or the prophetic tales (qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ), as Hasson notes. In many writings, Egypt is characterized as “the holy, good and blessed land” (al-ard al-muqaddasa al-ṭayyiba al-mubāraka).245 As Hasson describes it, “the wealth of Egypt and its economic and political importance prompted an abundance of traditions in praise of the country. Most of these traditions were attributed to the Prophet, his Companions or the Bible and eventually became incorporated into the exegesis of the relevant qur’anic verses.”246 Another

244 Hasson, “Egypt,” 11.
case in point is Jerusalem. Taking some verses of the Qur’an into consideration, Muslim tradition constructed “an image of Jerusalem that combined Jewish and Christian elements with specifically Islamic ones.” This depiction of Jerusalem is best reflected in the exegetical works and the faḍāʾil al-Quds (“Virtues of Jerusalem”) literature. As Heribert Busse explains, such literary effort was mostly done by those authors who lived in this locality and felt proud doing so. It is noteworthy that exegetes who did not live in close proximity to Jerusalem did not link certain verses to Jerusalem. As Busse observes, “likewise, they claimed exclusiveness for Jerusalem in passages for which the mufassirūn offered a variety of interpretations.” Since the Qur’an regards the entire universe as sacred by its nature of being God’s manifestation of His attributes, the approach of declaring certain spaces as special or sacred does not necessary contradict qur’anic notions. That being said though, an exclusive and insistent attitude limiting sacredness only to certain locations becomes problematic as it may create a dichotomy of holy and less holy or unholy spaces and may lead to arrogant attitudes assigning a special significance to one’s territory. Although the Qur’an does mention specific areas, God’s signs, dominion and rule encompass the entire globe as described in Q 24:35, “God is the Light of the heavens and earth.” This reinforces the idea that the divine presence or favor cannot be limited to one designated territory or space as phrased in Q 2:115, “The East and the West belong to God:

247 See Q17:1, “Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship [Mecca] to the furthest place of worship [Jerusalem], whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him some of Our signs: He alone is the All Hearing, the All Seeing,” and Q 2:142-50, “Foolish people will say, ‘What has turned them away from the prayer direction they used to face?’ Say, ‘East and West belong to God. He guides whoever He will to the right way.’”


wherever you turn, there is His Face. God is all pervading and all knowing,” or as in Q 55:17, “He is Lord of the two risings (rabb al-mashriqayn) and Lord of the two settings (rabb al-maghribayn).251

That human beings should be both directed to the invisible and visible realm – heavens and earth – is further illustrated by the recurring term of al-ʿālamīn which occurs 73 times in the Qur’an. It is especially in sura al-Fātiḥa’s second verse the reader encounters it for the first time in the corpus. The verse says “Praise be to God, the Lord of all created beings” or in other translations “Lord of all the worlds” (rabb al-ʿālamīn).252 Qur’an commentators have generally maintained that all creatures are designated by this term ʿālamīn.253 Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687) the well-known early Qur’an commentator defines ʿālamīn has the meaning of the whole creation. This includes not only the heavens and the earth but also what is in and between them.254 Such qur’anic phrases remind the reader that the universe consists of numerous worlds and that God’s dominion includes the world of humankind, angels, plants, this world and the next – in short the entire creation. The creational link and the various exchanges between human beings, the earth and the heavens is stressed and is the main point of connection. What is more, this relationship transcends artificial boundaries not only between humanity but also among the entire creation.

251 See also Q 2:142, “Foolish people will say, ‘What has turned them away from the prayer direction they used to face?’ Say, ‘East and West belong to God. He guides whoever He will to the right way,’” Q 2:177, “Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West,” Q 26:28, “Moses continued, ‘Lord of the East and West and everything between them. If you would only use your reason!’” Q 37:5, “Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between them, Lord of every sunrise.”
252 “/ / ‘-l-m,” in Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage.
253 Binyamin Abrahamov, “World,” in Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān, Vol.5, 552
254 Abrahamov, “World,” 552.
This state of affairs is also reflected in the prophetic task of Muhammad. Unlike the previous prophets, Muhammad is described as a universal prophet whose mission goes beyond ethnic and worldly boundaries. In Q 4:79 one reads, “We have sent you as a messenger to humankind (lil- nās),” and Q 21:107 declares, “It was only as a mercy that we sent you to all the worlds (lil- ʿālamīn).” Muhammad’s audience includes also the jinn as stated in Q 46:29, “We sent a group of jinn to you to listen to the Qur’an. When they heard it, they said to one another, ‘Be quiet!’ Then when it was finished they turned to their community and gave them warning.” Hence, the universality of Muhammad’s prophethood defies notions of borders and barriers and invites his followers to have a wider perspective on this world.

To reiterate, the Qur’an’s focus on the heavenly and earthly realm brings to mind the interconnected nature of the cosmos. As Azizah Y. al-Hibri observes, implicit here is a unity between physics and metaphysics, inanimate and animate and a rejection of a stark division between the spiritual and material world. This will become clearer when looking more closely at the different elements involved in Adam’s creation. As al-Hibri rightly points out, the qur’anic pair of heaven and earth is related to the notion of tawḥīd. If everything exists by being linked to God, there is also an interconnection between creatures which ultimately reflects God’s unity. Such an interconnected and interdependent relationship necessitates then the belief in tawḥīd – a faith which understands that the divine presence cannot be localized or limited to one spot.

Viewed from these qur’anic depictions, human beings are constantly reminded to live with the

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awareness that God’s lordship encompasses both the vast heavenly and earthly realm. The Qur’an attempts to establish the notion that human beings are not simply terrestrial beings but are linked to the invisible realm and who ideally should have a firm faith in the Unseen (al-ghayb).

The Qur’an’s emphasis on the interconnectedness of these two realms has several ramifications for humankind. First, it demonstrates that the Qur’an is quite insistent that the human self cannot be limited to a territorial existence or that one is reduced to living within nation borders alone. In other words, the qur’anic passages call human beings to transcend earthly terrain and to enlarge their humanness to their heavenly origin by going beyond national borders. Humanity can therefore by its very primordial nature not be reduced to an earthly life alone. The interconnected nature of the universe and the role humans occupy in it imply rather what can be termed a “cosmic identity.”

The fact that the Qur’an is frequently focusing on the heavens and the earth implies a tendency inherent in humans to lose sight of the extraterrestrial kingdom. In fact, the Qur’an’s recurring critique of being too obsessed with this world (al-dunyā), attempting to fully settle here and ignoring the unseen dimension is very prevalent. In this sense, Q 3:185 says, “The present world (al-ḥayāt al-dunyā) is only an illusory pleasure,” or Q 6:32, “The life of this world (al-ḥayāt al-dunyā) is nothing but a game (laʿib) and a distraction (lahw); the Home in the Hereafter (al-dār al-ʾākhira) is best for those who are aware of God. Why will you [people] not understand?” Al-dunyā mostly known for its reference to the life on earth translates as the
“lower, lowest” or “nearer, nearest” with regards to its value. In the Qur’an the word appears in one hundred and fifteen instances and refers to the location and time spent on this earth. In many passages the Qur’an confronts those who do not embrace faith in the hereafter. They are the ones who own a delusional perspective about this world: “They say, ‘There is nothing beyond our life in this world (hayātunā al-dunyā): we shall not be raised from the dead,’” (Q 6:29). Believers are not immune from such a temptation as Q 9:38 shows, “Believers, why, when it is said to you, ‘Go and fight in God’s cause,’ do you feel weighed down to the ground? Do you prefer this world to the life to come? How small the enjoyment of this world is, compared with the life to come.”

This is not to say that the Qur’an employs a world-denying attitude. As noted earlier both realms are depicted as important. The Qur’ans both/and approach towards giving both worlds their due is evident throughout its discourse. It does not adopt an escapist attitude. Q 2:201 is a case in point, “Others pray, ‘Our Lord, give us good in this world (al-dunyā) and in the Hereafter

257 Abrahamov, “World,” 552.
258 Abrahamov, “World,” 552.
259 See also Q 6:70, “Leave to themselves those who take their religion for a mere game and distraction and are deceived by the life of this world, but continue to remind them with the [Qur’an], lest any soul be damned by what it has done – it will have no one to protect it from God and no one to intercede; whatever ransom it may offer will not be accepted. Such are those who are damned by their own actions: they will have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment, because they used to defy [God],” Q 6:130, “Company of jinn and mankind! Did messengers not come from among you to recite My revelations to you and warn that you would meet this Day?’ They will say, ‘We testify against ourselves.’ The life of this world seduced them, but they will testify against themselves that they rejected the truth,” Q 7:51, “Those who took their religion for distraction, a mere game, and were deluded by worldly life. Today We shall ignore them, just as they have ignored their meeting with this Day and denied Our Revelations,” Q 10:7-8, “Those who do not expect to meet Us and are pleased with the life of this world, contenting themselves with it and paying no heed to Our signs, shall have the Fire for their home because of what they used to do,” Q 10:23, “Yet, no sooner does He save them than, back on land, they behave outrageously against all that is right. People! Your outrageous behavior only works against yourselves. Take your little enjoyment in this present life; in the end you will return to Us and We shall confront you with everything you have done,” Q 13:26, “God gives abundantly to whoever He will, and sparingly to whoever He will – and though they may revel in the life of this world, it is but a fleeting comfort compared with the Life to come,” or Q 23:37, “There is only the life of this world: we die, we live, but we will never be resurrected.”
(al-ʾākhira), and protect us from the torment of the Fire.” Q 28:77 equally states, “Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for God does not love those who do this.” These passages demonstrate that human beings by their very nature and origin are related intrinsically to the heavens but also to the earth as their temporary abode and place of assignment.

4.1.2 Graduality and Motion

As we continue to focus on the moment of the divine announcement, several other elements stand out. Inherent in this conversation between God and the angels is a graduality in the process of creation. Angels are already on the cosmic stage, the human being instead will be created at last. That the creation comes about in stages or in a gradual way, also hints to the notion of movement, change, and activity. There is a certain dynamism apparent in these accounts. As for graduality, according to the previous verse of Q 2:29, God first created all that is on the earth and then created the seven heavens – so an order or stages of creation become evident. In Q 7:54 as well as on other occasions we read about creation of the worlds occurring in six days – again supporting the notion of a gradual creation, “Your Lord is God, who created

260 See also Q 7:156, “Grant us good things in this world and in the life to come. We turn to You. God said, “My punishment I bring on whoever I will, but My Mercy embraces all things,” Q 10:64, “For them there is good news in this life and in the Hereafter – there is no changing the word of God – that is truly the supreme triumph,” or Q 16:30, “But when the righteous are asked, ‘What has your Lord sent down?’ they will say, ‘All that is good.’ There is good in this present world for those who do good, but their home in the Hereafter is far better: the home of the righteous is excellent,” Q 29:27, “We gave Isaac and Jacob to Abraham, and placed prophethood and Scripture among his offspring. We gave him his rewards in this world, and in the life to come he will be among the righteous,” and Q 39:10, “Say, ‘[God says], believing servants, be mindful of your Lord! Those who do good in this world will have a good reward – God’s earth is wide – and those who persevere patiently will be given a full and unstinting reward.’”
the heavens and earth in six Days, then established Himself on the throne.” In the same vein, Q 41:9 maintains that the earth came into being by God’s power in two days, “Say, ‘How can you disregard the One who created the earth in two Days (yawmayn)? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds!’” Q 41:10 reminds its reader further that “He placed solid mountains on it, blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek to them – all in four Days.” These descriptions should not be understood literally according to human standards. Qur’anic notions of time differ from human understanding as Q 22:47 states: “A Day (yawm) with your Lord is like a thousand years by your reckoning.”

As Abdulaziz Sachedina points out, Adam’s creation happens as the ultimate last creational act of God. The angels are already on the scene and the heavens and earth came already into being. Q 15:26-27 highlights the gradual process in creation, “We created man out of dried clay formed from dark – the jinn We created before, from the fire of scorching wind.” In another instance of Q 23:12-14 the process is expressed in more detail,

We created man from an essence of clay (ṭīn), then We placed him as a drop of fluid (nuṭfa) in a safe place, then We made that drop into a clinging form (ʿalaqa), and We made that form into a lump of flesh (muḍgha), and We made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later We made him into other forms – glory be to God, the best of creators!

This gradual creation of the embryo in the mother’s womb is also echoed in Q 71:14: “When He has created you stage by stage (literally “times,” ʿatwāran).” Within this framework, graduality implies a progression, a migration from one stage to another. The Qur’an does not endorse a

261 Abdulaziz Sachedina, “Human Vicegerency: A Blessing or A Curse? The Challenge to be God’s Caliph in the Quran,” in Humanity before God, 32.
static attitude but presents progression as integral to God’s creativity in the universe. In order for something to grow and mature, graduality as expressed through time and stages is important. According to the Q 46:15, a man reaches maturity at “forty years.” The stress on maturity brings to mind the importance of the inner progression of the human being. The Qur’an’s depiction of the physical stages as well as the inner spiritual migration of a person calls to mind that both are essential for growth.

4.1.3 The Migratory Event of the Qur’an

Interestingly, the revelation of the Qur’an itself took place in a gradual form of twenty-three years and hence shows how such a progression is central for God’s actions in the world. In reading Daniel G. Groody’s captivating piece “Fruit of the Vine and Work of Human Hands: Immigration and the Eucharist” one can discern a parallel within the revelatory process of the Qur’an. In his essay, Groody evaluates the tragedy of undocumented immigration in the United States through the lens of the Eucharist and brings a new way of understanding the immigrant struggle. There are undeniably many familiar Islamic notions of sacrifice and selfless giving within such a “eucharistic reading” of migration. While an understanding of God who is “crossing over into the dark territory of a sinful, broken humanity” is a very distinct formulation of the Christian faith, such a descending Christology reveals some similarity to a “descending Qur’anology” or the process of tanzīl (coming down, sending down). The sending down comes gradually as Q 17:106 states, “It is a recitation that We have revealed in parts.

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(faraqnāhu), so that you can recite it to people at intervals; We have sent it down (nazzalnāhu) little by little (tanzīlā).” From a narrow perspective, a descending Christology is hard to reconcile with the established Islamic concept of God who while being very close to His servants remains utterly transcendent and does not migrate towards a fallen world. As Daniel A. Madigan observes, “The Islamic tradition, in developing its ever more elaborate ‘topology’ of revelation, is certainly careful to maintain the distance between God and humanity. Nevertheless, even if the divine essence remains inaccessible, a genuine unveiling of God’s knowledge and manifestation of God’s will does take place.”265 In his reevaluation of the key term kitāb as it appears in the Qur’an by utilizing a semantic analysis, Madigan has uncovered an important element stressing the migratory facet of the Qur’an. His study demonstrates that the Qur’an understands itself not so much as a completed book but as an ongoing process of divine “writing” and “re-writing” (emphasis mine).266 This dynamic and responsive dimension of the Qur’an is a central aspect of its claim for providing continuing guidance to Muslims. By the same token, its meanings are never fixed or settled. Instead, they are relational and move constantly depending on the context and the audience. If the Qur’an then is characterized by a certain dynamism, progression, movement, change and flow it is to be expected that the same internal progression, dynamism and mobility is mirrored by its readers as well. To embody the Qur’an means to take on its character as the Prophet has done who seemed to have never settled fully in the world but described himself as a traveler resting under the shade of a tree.

The differences notwithstanding, the descent of the Word of God into the “lostness” of the human condition is a common theme in Christian and Islamic theology. Granted there are big differences in the way this is understood. In Islam the word of God in form of the Qur’an is not vulnerable – literally woundable – in the same way. Still it has to bear rejection and mockery. From its first moment of arrival, the Qur’an as a “heavenly migrant” entering this world had to withstand frequent accusations, refutation, insult, denial, ridicule and contempt – reactions which it continued to generate to this very day. Incidents of burning the Qur’an or exploiting and abusing it for one’s own selfish agendas are still all too common even among those who claim to value it the most.

The Qur’an is full of accounts describing the tragic fate of those people of faith – particularly messengers – who dared to live and proclaim the divine message to their communities. Bearing the divine trust entails being willing and embracing the possibility of a position of estrangement and rejection by even those whom one considers very close. The Qur’an frequently points out that messengers were well-established members within their communities. They were not alien to the local language and were seen as very close. Verses like Q 10:47 and Q 16:36 express this notion in a direct way. In a well-known narration

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267 Q 14:4, “We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people’s language (bi-lisāni qawmihi) to make things clear to them. But still God leaves whoever He will to stray, and guides whoever He will: He is the Almighty, the All Wise.”

268 See for instance Q 26:105-106, “The people of Noah, too, called the messengers liars. Their brother Noah said to them, ‘Will you not be mindful of God?’” Similarly, Q 26:161 says, “Their brother Lot said to them, ‘Will you not be mindful of God?’”

269 Q 10:47, “Every community (umma) is sent a messenger, and when their messenger comes, they will be judged justly; they will not be wronged,” and Q 16:36, “We sent a messenger to every community (umma), saying, ‘Worship God and shun false gods.’ Among them were some God guided; misguidance took hold of others. So travel through the earth and see what was the fate of those who denied the truth.”
collected in the Sahih Muslim, the Prophet Muhammad is described as “embodying the Qur’an” (kāna khuluquhu al-qur’ān) by his wife ʿĀʾisha.270 He experienced first-hand not only an interior but also a physical exile – his ultimate emigration (hijra) to Madina. As Muhammad himself put it in a statement that was noted earlier, “Islam began strange (gharīban), and it will become strange (gharīb) again just like it was at the beginning, so blessed are the strangers (ṭūbā al-ghurabā’).”271 In his saying, one can certainly find a positive affirmation that carrying the qur’ānic message and becoming a stranger in this world is a blessed task and nothing to be afraid of. Being mentally ready and internalize that such an estrangement can take place is not only comforting but mirrors the natural fate of messengers who have gone through the same experience. The Prophet prepares his followers to have such a realistic outlook.

In the Qur’an the reader encounters many narratives describing the painful and hurtful response a lot of the messengers received from their communities. God clearly states that respect and obedience needs to be expressed in every form and fashion towards the revelation and the prophets. Q 4:64 states in that regard, “All the messengers We sent were meant to be obeyed, by God’s leave.” However, what is experienced by these divinely sent messengers is nothing but contempt, ridicule and rejection.272 Instead of heeding the divine call, the revelation is denigrated

270 The Qur’an declares in Q 68:4, “Truly, you have a strong character (wa innaka la ʿalā khuluqin ʿazīm).” Likewise, Q 33:21 states, “The Messenger of God is an excellent model (uswatun ḥasanatun) for those of you who put your hope in God and the Last Day and remember Him often.” According to a report on the authority of Qatada, ʿĀʾisha said the mannerism and character of the Prophet was whatever was stated in the Qur’an. See Sahih Muslim http://sunnah.com/muslim/6/168
271 Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Sahih Muslim, 145, Book 1, Hadith 279 http://sunnah.com/muslim/1/279.
272 See for example Q 11:59, “These were the ʿĀd: they rejected their Lord’s signs, disobeyed His messengers, and followed the command of every obstinate tyrant,” Q 15:11, “But they mocked every single messenger that came to them,” Q 3:184, “If they reject you, so have other messengers been rejected before you, even though they came with clear evidence, books of wisdom and enlightening scripture,” Q 22:42, “If they reject you, so did the people of Noah
as a collection of “muddled dreams” (adghāthuru ʿahlām). Prophets are accused of being magicians using evil power to influence their surrounding. In more negative terms they are possessed by evil supernatural powers or they are just inventing useless poetry. Some of the messengers are even killed by their own people. The Israelite prophets are a case in point. The purpose of these prophetic narratives is also to offer some comfort to Muhammad in showing that every community treated the carriers of the divine revelation like outcasts.

Although the Qurʾan and those who adopt its message will be constantly challenged with these kind of negative and even tragic instances, an escapist or passive attitude is not endorsed by the Qurʾan. To the contrary, the Qurʾan in its self-referential nature continues to insist on its central role in this worldly realm while being loyal to its heavenly origin. It does not give up on its varied audience, engages with it, poses questions for reflection and contemplation, and does not give into the empty accusations. The Qurʾan remains highly active and dynamic and is entirely present in the discourse with those who question its credibility. Here again, the Qurʾan

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273 Q 21:5, “Some say ‘Muddled Dreams’; others, ‘He has made it up’; yet others, ‘He is just a poet, let him show us a sign as previous messengers did.’”

274 See for instance Q 51:52, “Every previous people to whom a messenger was sent also said, ‘A sorcerer, or a madman!’”

275 See for example Q 14:13, “The disbelievers said to their messengers, ‘We shall expel you from our land unless you return to our religion.’ But their Lord inspired the messengers: ‘We shall destroy the evildoers,’” Q 2:61, “Remember when you said, ‘Moses, we cannot bear to eat only one kind of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us some of the earth’s produce, its herbs and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions.’ He said, ‘Would you exchange better for worse? Go to Egypt and there you will find what you have asked for.’ They were struck with humiliation and wretchedness, and they incurred the wrath of God because they persistently rejected His messages and killed prophets contrary to all that is right. All this was because they disobeyed and were lawbreakers,” Q 2:91, “When it is said to them, ‘Believe in God’s revelations,’ they reply, ‘We believe in what was revealed to us,’ but they do not believe in what came afterwards, though it is the truth confirming what they already have. Say, ‘Why did you kill God’s prophets in the past if you were true believers?’”
transfers this active attitude to those who carry out its message. Q 51:54 puts it quite distinctly, “So ignore them – you are not to blame – and go on reminding, it is good for those who believe to be reminded.” The duty of God’s messengers is to continue to “announce the good news and give warnings (mubashhirīna wa-mundhirīna).” What counts in the sight of God is to embody the message in one’s own life and the active engagement with one’s surrounding. The messengers will thus not be held accountable for the success or failure of delivering the divine guidance. What is only asked of them by God is to purely convey the message as Q 16:35 asserts, “Are the messengers obliged to do anything other than deliver [their message] clearly (al-balāgh al-mubīn)?”

The faithful, as the Qur’an promises, will be rewarded for their patience and perseverance. As in the case of the prophetic examples, the ultimate success will be with the believers since they struggle to live according to divine guidance and receive God’s pleasure. Those who insist on ridiculing and rejecting the divine message will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. In some cases, as the qur’anic passages tell us, communities are even punished already on earth for their disobedience. God in the Qur’an is even described as al-muntaqim – the Avenger. God will seek revenge for those who have been oppressed unjustly. Those who turn away from their evil behaviors can seek refuge in God’s forgiveness and mercy. At the end, God’s will will prevail, true justice and order will be maintained.

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276 See Q 4:165, “They were messengers bearing good news and warning, so that humankind would have no excuse before God, after receiving the messengers: God is almighty, and all wise,” Q 18:56, “We only send messengers to bring good news and to deliver warning, yet the disbelievers seek to refute the truth with false arguments and make fun of My messages and warnings.”
That the Qur’an in its nature is a migratory event, is further demonstrated through the fact that its *suras* are divided into Meccan and Medinan chapters. Depending on the location of revelation *suras* were designated either as Meccan or Medinan. This is however not a clear cut division since many suras can include both Meccan and Medinan revelations. These chapters of the Qur’an are constant reminders for Muslims that the event of the *hijra* is a foundational element in their collective identity. It defined the community of believers to such an extent, that the beginning of the Islamic calendar was marked by this historical migration. It was ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb – the second caliph – who established the Muslim calendar. After their arrival in Medina, Muslims had now the freedom to practice their faith. Fear from persecution was finally not a reality anymore. Those who left Mecca were called the *muhājirūn* (the emigrants). The Medinans who assisted them in their new life carried the title *anṣār* (the helpers). The term *hijra* with its variety of words occurs in thirty-one instances in the Qur’an. Among this number, sixteen are connected to the historical event of the emigration. *Hijra* also means to leave the home for the sake of God.277

As Al-Faruque explains, early on there was some disagreement among Muslim scholars on the question of who took away most of the benefit from the event of the *hijra*. It is well-known that the Medinan delegation approached the Prophet first and asked him whether he could come to their city and make an end to the internal feuds. It seemed to be a win win situation for both parties since the early Muslim community faced severe oppression from the Meccan status quo. With the arrival of the Prophet in Medina, the community was finally able to establish some

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peace and harmony. Be that as it may, it seems that both parties were able to gain a significant advancement from the *hijra*. Here, one can deduce that migration should not be simply assumed as an affair that brings only a one-sided benefit or burden. Rather, both parties – the receiving and the migrant community – can equally benefit from such a transition and might also go through a process of burden. The interpretive tradition in its ambiguous views on the emigration proves this point only too well.

Al-Faruque notes further that additional disagreement revolved around the question whether the concept of the *hijra* was only applicable to this particular early Muslim community or whether the obligation to emigrate had still some validity for later Muslims. Such ambiguity in opinions was caused by the number of Prophetic statements offering reason for arguing into different directions. The *hijra* gained so much prominence within Islamic scholarship that *hadīth* collections dealt with this issue in a separate section. Today there is wide consensus that Muslims should emigrate if they can no longer practice their religion in safety.

In conclusion, this historical chapter of the *hijra* bears so many significant lessons for the contemporary situation of migration that further study in light of the present context needs to be undertaken in a fresh and more systematic way. The *hijra* is intimately related to the migratory nature of the Qur’an. Suffice it to say that migration therefore is of great importance to the development of Islam and to Muslims’ faith identity.

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4.1.4 Mobility and Change

As noted earlier, the gradual progression in the creation narratives also indicate elements of motion, change and mobility. Divine creativity is reflected within the motions and activities in the universe. As Angelika Neuwirth observes, the Qur’an portrays God as a creator who is involved with every aspect of His creation and does not cease to observe every matter directly on His own.\(^{280}\) Q 55:29 is a case in point: “Everyone in heaven and earth entreats Him; every day He attends to some task (\textit{kulla yawmin huwa fī sha’\'n}).” In Q 2:255 it is further stated: “God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him (\textit{lā ta’khudhuhu sinnatun wa-lā nawm}).” Creation is therefore not a one-time event but rather a never-ending process underlining once more the aspect of dynamism and motion in the universe. God’s constant presence in the universe is affirmed through His active role.

As Uri Rubin points out, within the Qur’anic framework a number of vehicles – means for mobility – are depicted as God’s special manifestations of grace and mercy.\(^{281}\) For example, Q 17:70 is stating, “We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created.” The same notion appears in Q 10:22, “It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are sailing on ships and rejoicing in the favouring wind, a storm arrives: waves come at those on board from all sides and they feel there is no escape. Then they pray to God, professing sincere devotion to Him, ‘If you save us from this we shall be truly thankful.’”

\(^{280}\) Neuwirth, “Cosmology,” 444.
Certain animals on land are described in like manner, “They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship – truly your Lord is kind and merciful – horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and use for show, and other things you know nothing about,” (Q 16:7-8). In several instances, the Qur’an reminds its audience that animals were subdued to humanity for its own benefit.\(^{282}\) A famous Qur’anic supplication found in Q 43:12-14 and recited by many Muslims today and in the past while travelling goes, “Who created every kind of thing, who gave you ships and animals to ride on so that you may remember your Lord’s grace when you are seated on them and say, ‘Glory be to Him who has given us control over this; we could not have done this by ourselves. Truly, it is to our Lord that we are returning.’”

Ships as well express God’s creative power, as claimed in Q 42:32-33, “Among His signs are the ships, sailing like floating mountains: if He willed, He could bring the wind to a standstill and they would lie motionless on the surface of the sea – there truly are signs in this for anyone who is steadfast and thankful.”\(^{283}\) As Uri Rubin points out, “the glory of ships as representing divine blessing comes out most clearly in the fact that in Q 51:3 God swears by them, calling them ‘the smooth runners’ (fa-l- jāriyātī yusran).”\(^{284}\) The main intention of the Qur’an in enumerating these blessings is to encourage humankind to show constant gratitude and not to take divine favors for granted. With respect to that Q 16:14 reads, “It is He who made the sea of benefit to you: you eat fresh fish from it and bring out jewelry to wear; you see the ships cutting

\(^{282}\) See for example Q 36:71-72, “Can they not see how, among the things made by Our hands, We have created livestock they control, and made them obedient, so that some can be used for riding, some for food, some for other benefits, and some for drink? Will they not give thanks?” or Q 40:79-80, “It is God who provides livestock for you, some for riding and some for your food; you have other benefits in them too. You can reach any destination you wish on them: they carry you, as ships carry you [on the sea].”

\(^{283}\) See also Q 55:24, “His are the moving ships that float, high as mountains, on the sea.”

through its waves so that you may go in search of His bounty and give thanks.”

As is evident, many of these Qur’an verses present these bounties as signs of God calling people to reflect and ponder over the mercy, power and grace of their Creator. Airplanes and cars have been also regarded as being special blessings based on Qur’anic accounts of the miracle of iron melting given to Prophet David as stated in Q 34:10, “We graced David with Our favour. We said, ‘You mountains, echo God’s praises together with him, and you birds, too.’ We softened iron for him, saying, ‘Make coats of chain mail and measure the links well.’ ‘Do good, all of you, for I see everything you do.’” Since iron is seen as the foundation for these technological advancements, modern commentaries like the *Risale-i Nur* included other vehicles also as special blessings of God.

In this respect Said Nursi states that, Q 21:81 referring to Prophet Solomon points also implicitly to the miracle of airplanes crossing great distances within a short time, “We harnessed the stormy wind for Solomon, so that it sped by his command to the land We had blessed – We have knowledge of all things.”

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285 See for instance Q 14:32, “It is God who created the heavens and earth, who has sent down water from the sky and with it brought forth produce to nourish you; He has made ships useful to you, sailing the sea by His command, and the rivers too.” Q 17:66, “[People], it is your Lord who makes ships go smoothly for you on the sea so that you can seek His bounty: He is most merciful towards you,” Q 22:65, “Have you not considered how God has made everything on the earth of service to you? And the ships that sail the sea at His command? That He keeps the heavens from falling down on the earth without His permission? God is most compassionate and most merciful to mankind,” Q 30:46, “Another of His signs is that He sends out the winds bearing good news, giving you a taste of His grace, making the ships sail at His command, enabling you to [journey in] search of His bounty so that you may be grateful.” Q 31:31, “[Prophet], do you not see that ships sail through the sea, by the grace of God, to show you [people] some of His wonders? Truly there are signs in this for every steadfast, thankful person,” Q 35:12, “The two bodies of water are not alike – one is palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, the other salty and bitter – yet from each you eat fresh fish and extract ornaments to wear, and in each you see the ships ploughing their course so that you may seek God’s bounty and be grateful,” or Q 45:12, “It is God who made the sea of use to you – ships sail on it by His command so that you can seek His bounty and give Him thanks.”


These activities of motion and mobility demonstrate that in change and movement lies not only divine wisdom and blessing but it is the DNA of the cosmos and consequently the believer who not only was created in stages but also moved down from heaven to earth. Outer progressions initiate and reinforce an inner dynamism or spiritual progress as for instance articulated in verses like Q 30:9: “Have they not travelled through the land and seen how their predecessors met their end? They were mightier than them: they cultivated the earth more and built more upon it. Their own messengers also came to them with clear signs: God did not wrong them; they wronged themselves,” or Q 3:137, “God’s ways have operated before your time: travel through the land, and see what was the end of those who disbelieved.” As William C. Chittick has put it, “in this context, the Qur’an recommends ‘travelling in the earth’ as a means of widening one’s horizon and coming to understand the vanity and ephemerality of local ties and local issues.”

As these accounts on mobility indicate, movement while in itself a blessing, is also a means to an end. It activates a spiritual progression within a believer and initiates other human faculties to flourish and grow. Thinking and behavior is supposed to positively evolve while witnessing the creative dynamism in the universe. Means for travel are deeply connected with the call to adopt an attitude of gratitude but also to observe the vanishing nature of the universe. God initiates the dynamism in the universe for an inner move and dynamism within the believer.

While sleep is specifically ordained for humans to make them rest as Q 78:8-11 explains, it seems to be also aimed to maintain their dynamism and activity, “Did We no create you in

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pairs, give you sleep for rest, the night as a cover, and the day for your livelihood?” That sleep is a special blessing granted by God is also alluded to in Q 30:23, which states that “Among His signs are your sleep, by night and by day, and your seeking of His bounty. There truly are signs in this for those who know.” That human beings are migrant in nature is also alluded to in this instance of Q 39:42, “God takes souls at the time of death and the souls of the living while they sleep. He keeps hold of those whose death He has ordained and sends the others back until their appointed time: there truly are signs in this for those who reflect.”

4.1.5 God-given Dignity

With respect to the second element in the annunciation – the personal divine involvement in the creation of humans – the following features stand out. The use of the emphasized personal pronoun in this verse – “Indeed, I” (innī) – to express the definitive divine declaration of bringing a human person into existence is noteworthy. It underlines the very intimate and close relationship between God and humans. For Said Nursi, the nature of the intensifying particle innī is also to repulse doubts.289 The intensity of self-reference becomes especially obvious in the creation accounts, “Truly, I will create a mortal” (innī khāliqun basharan) as seen in Q 15:28 and 38:71. Expressions such as in Q 2:160, “Unless they repent, make amends, and declare the truth. I will certainly accept their repentance: I am the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful,” or, “[Prophet], tell My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful” as in Q 15:49 reiterate the close relationship between humanity and their Creator.

289 Nursi, İşärât ül-İ’caz, (İstanbul: Söz Publications, 2010), 345.
Although the Qur’an stresses God’s transcendence with phrases like “Nothing is like Him,” as in Q 42:11, it also frequently directs its readers to be aware of God’s immanence as expressed in the verse of Q 50:16, “We created the human being – We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein.” Another case in point is Q 2:186, “[Prophet], if My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I respond to those who call Me, so let them respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may be guided.” These accounts exemplify the deep care and compassion for the human being. God valued and dignified the human being to the extent that no mediator is needed to step into a conversation with Him.

This intimacy and personal relation with the divine is emphasized also with the previous appearance of “your Lord” (rabbuka) in the same verse as opposed to the qur’anic usage of “Lord of the worlds” (rabb al-ʿālamīn) most prominent in sura al-Fātiha. The latter highlights the fact that God is involved with the whole creation and that His dominion encompasses everything and every being. God, moreover, is invoked since pre-Islamic times by the name rabb.290 As Böwering notes, the term rabb appears many hundred times in the Qur’an serving mostly as a title for God. He states,

In what the Islamic tradition identifies as the first Qur’ānic verse to have been revealed, Muhammad is summoned to speak “In the name of your Lord” (bismi rabbika, Q 96:1). Rabb is rarely used in the Medinan phase of Muḥammad’s Qur’ānic proclamation but is most frequently employed in its Meccan phases, as for examples in Q 87:1, “Extol the name of your Lord the most high” (sabbiḥīsma rabbika l-a’lā), or Q 79:24, “I am your Lord the most high” (anā rabbukumu l-a’lā).291

As is evident, while rabbuka with the second person singular pronoun highlights the close relationship with the Lord of each being, the second person plural – rabbukum – refers to the Lord of all creation.

While the divine address is directed to the Prophet Muhammad in the first place, it is equally drawing the attention of every individual believer, who has a direct connection with God. There are no intermediaries between the believer and God. God is hence not only the Lord of the collectivity and multiplicity of all creation as stressed by “rabb al-ʿālamīn” but also one’s very own individual and personal Lord (rabbuka). Such closeness also points to the idea that God regards human beings in high esteem and ennobled them. As verses like Q 17:70 state, “We have honoured (karramnā; related to karam, “noble nature”) the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created.” The human being is portrayed as being superior to all other creatures. For Nursi, the specific use of rabbuka is also proof for Muhammad’s significance and value in the divine plan in guiding humankind and stopping their corruption. As Nursi phrases it, “Muhammad is the supreme good deed of humankind that preponderates over all its iniquities and covers its faults.”

So here the divine voice turning to Muhammad and humanity in a personal way already provides an answer to the question of how much worth humankind is given.

In the Qur’an, it is normal for the divine first person to switch between singular and plural. Even though the creation story shifts in a number of instances from the singular to the plural...
pluralis maiestatis ("We created" as in Q 15:26-27) – the “magisterial or royal We” does not take away from God’s personal involvement with human creation. To Said Nursi’s mind, the use of the first person pronominal suffix “ī of innī” demonstrates that there are no intermediaries in His creation and giving of existence as there are in His speech and address as evident for instance in Q 4:105, “We have sent down the Scripture to you [Prophet] with the truth so that you can judge between people in accordance with what God has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray trust.” The intermediary in this case is the angel of revelation who shows God’s splendor. The mentioning of the third person singular in the same verse “so that you can judge between people in accordance with what God has shown you,” indicates, according to Nursi, that there are no intermediaries in the inspiration of meanings. It is however difficult to harmonize Nursi’s view with the other instances of the creation narrative in which the “We” is clearly employed as in Q 15:26-27 or Q 17:11. Other possible explanations for the “We” could be that certain materials like water and earth (clay) were used to shape the human being. They could hardly be described as intermediaries though. The “We” could also refer to the totality of the divine names being involved in the creation of Adam and would as such not take away from the direct involvement of God with humanity. I tend to favor this view since it can be more easily reconciled with the Qur’an’s strict notion of monotheism.

Interestingly, the creation narrative in the Genesis account of 1:26 with its declaration of “Let Us create humanity in Our image,” has caused much bewilderment among the rabbis. However, Genesis 1:27 states immediately, “And God created man in His image.” According to

293 Nursi, Ịşărât ụl-I’caz, 345.
Rashi, God’s intention was to manifest His humility. God addresses Himself to the angels and says to them, “Let Us make man in Our image.” God does not need the help of the angels, but as an expression of modesty and politeness, God invites them to be involved with the creation of humans. This should teach the believers that consulting with those lower in rank is an act of humility.\footnote{See for example Rashi’s commentary on Genesis 1:26-27 http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8165#showrashi=true.}

To stay within the moment of divine proclamation, the close relationship between human beings and their Creator, is further underlined through the use of the active participle jā‘īlun in Q 2:30. In this context it means to place or put something/somebody somewhere. This form from the root j- ‘-l is used four times in the Qur’an.\footnote{See for example Q 3:55, “God said, ‘Jesus, I will take you back and raise you up to Me. I will purify you of the disbelievers. To the Day of Resurrection I will make (jā‘īlu) those who followed you superior to those who disbelieved. Then you will all return to Me and I will judge between you regarding your differences,’” Q 18:7-8, “We have adorned (ja ‘alnā) the earth with attractive things so that We may test people to find out which of them do best, but We shall reduce all this to barren dust,” and Q 2:124, “When Abraham’s Lord tested Him with certain commandments, which he fulfilled, He said, ‘I will make you (jā‘iluka) a leader of people.’ Abraham asked, ‘And will You make leaders of my descendants too?’ God answered, ‘My pledge does not hold for those who do evil.’”}

It denotes again the active and direct involvement of the divine in placing human beings on earth which at the same time stresses their God-given worth.

According to Ṭabarī’s tafsīr, interpreters differed about the exact meaning of innī jā‘īlun. Some say it means “I am about to do…” and others say “I am about to create…” For Ṭabarī the correct meaning is “that He was about to appoint a khalīfā on earth.”\footnote{Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ʾan ta‘wil al-Qurʾān, Vol.1, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymiyya, 1964), 447.} Said Nursi interprets the choice of j- ‘-l instead of kh-’l-q by stating that what causes doubts and questions on the part of angels is humankind being “placed” on earth with the assignment to cultivate it. It is not human
beings’ creation and their existence which they question since existence is pure good and creation is an essential act of God. The worth of human beings is further emphasized according to Nursi by the use of \( fi \) *al-ard* – placed *in* the earth rather than *on* the earth. It indicates that humanity resembles the spirit breathed into the earth, and if it ever quits the earth, it will fall apart and expire.\(^{297}\) Nursi makes an important observation here and it is not difficult to agree with him in this regard.

To elaborate on what Nursi seems to suggest the following observation can be made. The current environmental crisis, for instance, is inextricably linked to the spiritual state of human beings. Many contemporary scholars, most prominently Seyyed Hossein Nasr, have pointed out that the crises humanity faces are nothing but a reflection of humankind’s spiritual crisis. In his work *Religion and the Order of Nature*, Nasr argues that the exploitation of the universe is caused by the modern secular mindset. He advocates a return back to a religious understanding which has always regarded the creation as sacred. Each faith tradition has rich resources encouraging its adherents to a respectful and dignified treatment of nature. It is only by uniting these spiritual forces that the universe can be protected.\(^{298}\) Human beings’ moral and ethical conduct on earth can have a deep impact on its ecological and environmental balance. In this sense humans can subvert the physical world far more than any other species possibly can. In

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\(^{297}\) Nursi, *İşârât ül-I’caz*, 346.

their custodial capacityhuman beings can therefore be aptly described as the “spirit of the earth,” as Nursi claims.

Bodman notes that jāʾil is not expressing God’s creation but only more broadly God’s action. The narrative in sura al-Baqara does not provide the reader with information on Adam’s creation. These details only appear in the other Qur’anic passages under consideration here.\(^{299}\) In the Qur’an jaʿala is also used as a synonym for khalaqa (to create).\(^{300}\)

Ṭabarî notes in citing al-Hasan and Qatāda that the specific location mentioned in this verse as “earth” is Mecca.\(^{301}\) Ibn Kathîr, however, objects by saying that this hadith is mursal – the chain of transmission is weak (daʿīf). He also believes that the word “Mecca” was inserted into the report later on.\(^{302}\) It could very well be that Adam and his wife’s departure point on earth might have been Mecca and given its centrality for the Islamic tradition, this does not seem farfetched. Some starting point is needed to undertake the earthly task. However, what should be more stressed is Adam’s being charged as the caretaker for the whole earth. It is clear from the Qur’an that human responsibility is not limited to one spot only. Instead, Scripture directs humanity’s attention frequently to the whole universe.

\(^{299}\) Bodman, The Poetics of Iblîs, 225.

\(^{300}\) Peterson, “Creation,” 478. See for instance Q 6:1, “Praise belongs to God who created the heavens and the earth and made (jaʿala) darkness and light; yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord!” Q 10:67, “It is He who made (jaʿala) the night so that you can rest in it and the daylight so that you can see – there truly are signs in this for those who hear,” Q 25:61, “Exalted is He who put (jaʿala) constellations in the heavens, a radiant light, and an illuminating moon,” Q 40:61, “It is God who has given you (jaʿala) the night in which to rest and the day in which to see. God is truly bountiful to people, but most people do not give thanks,” Q 40:64, “It is God who has given (jaʿala) you the earth for a dwelling place and the heavens for a canopy. He shaped you, formed you well, and provided you with good things. Such is God your Lord, so glory be to Him, the Lord of the Worlds.”

\(^{301}\) Al-Ṭabarî, Jāmiʿ al-Bayân, Vol.1, 448.

4.1.6 The Notion of *Khalīfa*

When your Lord told the angels, ‘I am putting a vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on earth,’ (Qur’an 2:30)

The third point contained in the divine statement concerns the notion of vicegerency on the earth (*fī al-ardī khalīfatan*). This section explores the use of the concept of the vicegerent (*khalīfa*) as applied to Adam in the Qur’an and how it relates to the whole human race – his descendants. As always, special attention is dedicated to migrant and host communities to whom the *Ur*-migrants – Adam and his wife – can provide guidance. The overall aim in this segment of our study is to show how the notion of *khalīfa* was initially interpreted in a narrow manner by applying it only to Adam who was understood as “succeeding” the angels or *jinn* on earth. This limited application came also to be reserved for the socio-political position of the caliphate.

However, as I demonstrate, Qur’an commentators increasingly became more confident in understanding the concept of the *khalīfa* as the “human vicegerency of God” on earth. As such, Adam and by extension all humankind is God’s representative on earth acting by His name and ideally implementing the divine rule. This now widely accepted interpretation posits a huge responsibility on the shoulders of humanity and calls migrant and host to equal task when addressing issues of common concern. The objective in analyzing the concept of *khalīfa* is to construct a solid theological ground reiterating first and foremost the fundamental dignity and worth of every human life. Second, it is to call both migrant and host communities to mutual responsibility in showing concerted effort and active participation in their societies when faced with migration issues.
Throughout Islamic history, the notion of *khalīfa* has occupied a prominent place and its importance can therefore not be dismissed. It comes therefore as no surprise that it was the focus of much scholarly attention.\(^3^0^3\) It is therefore worthwhile to offer first some brief observations on the different lexical meanings as they appear in the dictionaries and in the qur’anic framework. As a next step, a short survey on the interpretive tradition by looking at classical and contemporary Muslim opinion on the term *khalīfa* will help identify the meanings useful for the present study. Here, my main focus is the non-politically charged interpretations of the qur’anic term *khalīfa* as they bear significance for every individual and not only a political ruler.

For developing an environmental theology, David L. Johnston in his book *Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation\(^3^0^4\)*, has examined the notion of *khalīfa* as it appears in some of the Qur’an commentaries and provides some more additional reflections offered by other non-Muslim scholars like Kenneth Cragg. I will summarize few of

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his findings as he covers some similar grounds and will include additional exegetical works into the discussion to add more perspectives for an understanding of *khalīfa* as offered by the interpretive community. But first, a brief analysis of the lexical meaning of this term will be provided which is also summed up by Johnston.\(^{305}\)

According to the dictionary of Modern Arabic by Hans Wehr, the first form of the verb *khalafa* can be translated as “to be the successor, to succeed; to follow, come after; to take the place of, substitute; to replace; to lag behind; to stay behind; to be detained, be held back, be kept away, stay away.”\(^{306}\) In its second verb form, *khallafa* denotes the meaning of “to appoint as successor someone; to leave behind, leave someone or something; to have descendants, have offspring.” In its tenth form (*istakhlafa*) the meaning resembles the second form “to appoint as successor or vicar.”\(^{307}\) *Khalīfa* and its plural *khulafāʾ* and *khalāʾif* are translated as “vicar, deputy; successor; caliph.”\(^{308}\)

A look into Edward W. Lane’s lexicon denotes *khalafa* as “he came after, followed, succeeded, or remained after, another, or another that had perished or died.”\(^{309}\) In the Islamic tradition a common supplication said to someone who has lost his parents or loved ones is as follows, “May God be to thee a supplier of the place of thy father (*kāna allāhu khalīfata wālidika 'alayka*).”\(^{310}\) *Khalīfa* is translated as “a successor: and a vice-agent, vicegerent, lieutenant,

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\(^{308}\) Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 257.


\(^{310}\) Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 798.
substitute, proxy, or deputy: one who has been made, or appointed, to take the place of him who has been before him.”

Another use of the term in its verbal infinitive form *khillafa* reveals interesting nuances. For instance, *awṣa lahu bil-khillafati ala ahlihi wa malihi* would be translated as “he charged him by his will with the being his successor, or vice-agent over his family and property.”

Lane lists also the common political meaning for caliph, “the supreme, or greatest ruler or sovereign, who supplies the place of him who has been before him.” According to Lane, *khalifun* without the *ta marbuta* is the unchanged form of *khalifatun*. The *ta marbuta* only serves to stress the meaning. He also mentions that the two plural forms appearing in the Qur’an – *khalā‘if* and *khulafā‘* – denote two groups: The former is “generally applied to any people that have succeeded others, and supplied their places.” The latter frequently applies to “the successors of the Prophet.” Such usage is of course not mentioned in the Qur’an but was used for the political rulers in early Islamic history.

As Johnston observes, the *Lisān al-‘Arab* does not provide much data about the notion of *khalīfa* and only states, “one who is appointed in the place of someone before him (*alladhī yustakhlafu mimman qablahu*)”. In interpreting *khalīfa* in the David verse of Q 38:16, the *Lisān al-‘Arab* renders it as *al-sultān al-‘azam* (the greatest ruler or authority). This is most probably a reference to the political concept of the caliphate. Moreover Q 6:165, Q 10:14, and Q

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311 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 798. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 251.
312 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 792. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 252.
313 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 792. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 251.
314 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 792.
35:39 (God made you His khalāʾ if on earth) is understood as “He [God] made Muhammad’s umma the successors of all the nations.”

Turning more deeply to the qur’anic context, additional observations can be made. In John Penrice’s work on qur’anic vocabulary the reader discovers following meaning for khalafā, “to be behind, come after; to succeed; to do a thing behind one’s back; to act as a deputy.”

The trilateral root of kh-l-f appears 127 times in the Qur’an in twenty-three forms, according to the Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage. The term khalīfa occurs twice in the Qur’an in the singular form and seven times in the plural either as khalāʾ if or khulafāʾ. Q 2:30 is the only instance of the seven creation accounts in which this specific word khalīfa is mentioned. Badawi and Abdel Haleem render khalīfa as “representative” as it appears in Q 2:30 and as “successor, heir” as it is mentioned in Q 7:74, “Remember how He made you heirs (khulafāʾ a) after ’Ād and

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317 Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, 1235 as cited in Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 251.
318 John Penrice, A Dictionary and Glossary of the Kor-an with copious Grammatical References and Explanations of the Text: Arabic-English (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, no date), 44.
319 “خُلَافَاء,” in Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage.
320 Q 2:30, “When your Lord told the angels, ‘I am putting a vicegerent (khalīfa) on earth,’ they said, ‘How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your holiness?’ but He said, ‘I know that you do not know,’” and Q 38:26, “‘David, We have put you as a vicegerent (khalīfatan) over the land. Judge fairly between people. Do not follow your desires, lest they divert you from God’s path: those who wander from His path will have a painful torment because they ignore the Day of Reckoning.’”
321 In the following, I will cite the Qur’an verses with the Arabic original of khalīfa to preserve the range of meanings. Q 6:165, “It is He who made you khalāʾ ifa on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you. Your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is most forgiving and merciful,” Q 7:69, “Do you find it so strange that a message should come from your Lord, through a man in your midst, to warn you? Remember how He made you khulafāʾ a after Noah’s people, and increased your stature: remember God’s bounties, so that you may prosper,” Q 7:74, “Remember how He made you khulafāʾ a after ’Ād and settled you in the land to build yourselves forts on its plains and carve houses out of the mountains: remember God’s blessings and do not spread corruption in the land,” Q 10:14, “Later We made you their khalāʾ ifa in the land, to see how you would behave,” Q 10:73, “But they rejected him. We saved him and those with him on the Ark and made them khalāʾ ifa; and We drowned those who denied Our revelations – see what was the end of those who were forewarned!” Q 27:62, “Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you khulafāʾ a in the earth? Is it another god beside God? Little notice you take!” Q 35:39, “It is He who made you [people] khalāʾ ifa in the land. Those who deny the truth will bear the consequences: their denial will only make them more odious to their Lord, and add only to their loss.”
settled you in the land to build yourselves forts on its plains and carve houses out of the mountains: remember God’s blessings and do not spread corruption in the land.”

As we examine the exegetical material of classic and contemporary Muslim authors on Q 2:30 one can detect two opinions on the meaning of khalīfa. While some commentators did shy away from using the phrase khalīfa to mean khalīfat Allāh (the vicegerent of God), other exegetes in the past and those today have no hesitation to designate not only Adam but by extension all human beings as vicegerents of God. Lane makes following remarks,

Some say that the application of the title khalīfatu allāhi [The Vicegerent of God] is not allowable except to Adam and David because there is express authority in these instances; but others allow it in other cases like sulṭān allāhi and junūd allāhi and ḥizb allāhi and khayl allāhi; all of which have been heard.322

Despite the historical fact that certain groups understood and still continue to understand the concept of khalīfa as a religious-political institution, the Qur’an however does not lend itself solely for such a narrow application. As has been argued by a number of scholars, the term did experience an evolution with the Umayyad rulers, for instance, taking on the title khalīfat Allāh. Slowly khalīfa came to be associated only with the political meaning.323 The Umayyad authorities did not only presented themselves as God’s representatives on earth but also often

322 Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 792. See also Johnston, *Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text*, 252.
used the Qur’an as reference to justify these claims. This is evidently another contextual reading of the Qur’an in which the political climate played an important factor.

Al-Qāḍī observes that later Qur’an commentators like Al-Ṭabarī espoused a more political understanding of the concept of *khalīfa*. This attitude is however not reflected in the writings of early exegetes who did refrain from making such a connection. Al-Ṭabarī’s views are obvious when he states from the outset of his interpretation of Q 2:30, that the qur’anic term *khalīfa* is directly associated with the political role of the caliphate. Accordingly, he states, “because of this the supreme ruler (*al-sultān al-aʿẓam*) is called the *khalīfa* because he replaces the one who was before him, and takes his place in the affair, and is his successor (*khalaf*)”.

Much later exegetes like Ibn Kathīr continue in the same vein when discussing Q 2:30 and enumerate a number of characteristics the Muslim caliph should have in order to be deemed appropriate for the leadership position. The following criteria are listed for the exercise of leadership: the male authority needs to be a free, sane Muslim who is intelligent, just and able to exercise *ijtihād* (independent reasoning). He should be able to know the art of warfare and must be from the Quraysh.

As Johnston notes, by the time the Abbasids became the political leaders, the title *khalīfat Allāh* was well established as a political institution. The scholarly group of the ‘*ulamā’* still

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324 See for example the letter written by Al-Walīd II (d. 125/743) concerning the designation of his successors. In this long correspondence Walīd II employs qur’anic references. The letter is preserved in the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī. For the detailed content see Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 116-126.
objected to the idea that the political rulers are representatives of God on earth.³²⁸ Al-Qāḍī notes that the title *khalīfa* is not a shorter version of *khalīfat Allāh* (vicegerent of God) but a shortening for *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* (successor of the messenger of God). Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), the first caliph of the umma, carried this title. Despite its designation of a religious-political role the title was never able to be endorsed by Islamic political theory, as al-Qāḍī says.³²⁹ Considering the above, one can therefore say that the term *khalīfa* underwent some transformation with time. In fact, it is safe to talk about a certain politicization of qur’anic terms.

As al-Qāḍī points out, the interpretations offered by the early exegetes were collected by Ṭabarī in his commentary and it is here where one is not only able to find a summary of the dominant meanings of *khalīfa* but already discovers two interpretations of this word as it appears in Q 2:30.³³⁰ The exegetes struggled with the question of whom Adam was to succeed, represent or replace. In contrast to other qur’anic instances of the word *khalīfa* which would explicitly state whom the messengers would succeed, the Adam verse was not so clear.³³¹ Hence, the Adam verse became the basis for two lines of interpretations: While one dominant stream of thought argues that Adam was to replace some creatures on earth or succeed them, others favored the second main view that Adam was appointed to be God’s vicegerent and was considered to represent God’s authority and attributes on earth. As al-Qāḍī notes, since many commentators understood Adam as to mean “human being” in general, the conclusion was

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reached that all humans are God’s vicegerents. An example of the main first opinion on whom Adam will succeed is Ibn ‘Abbās’ (d. 68/687) comment on the verse mentioned in Ṭabarī’s tafsīr,

The first to inhabit the earth were the jinn. They spread corruption thereon and shed blood, and killed each other. So God sent Iblīs against them with an army of angels, and Iblīs and those with him killed them pursuing them as far as the islands of the oceans and the summits of the mountains. Then He created Adam and settled him thereon. That is why He has said: ‘I am about to place a khalīfa on earth.’

As al-Qāḍī remarks, with regard to the second view, some of those exegetes who did refrain from understanding Adam as God’s vicegerent, were not comfortable with the idea that this vulnerable human being had disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree. Moreover, he is characterized as someone who will create disorder and shed blood on earth. How could he be possibly representing God as His vicegerent? She speculates that some of the early commentators did not know how to deal with this issue and therefore chose not to say anything on Q 2:30. Another scenario is that the meaning of khalīfa was so well-established that they did not feel the need to add anything further. In Ibn Zayd (d. shortly after 145/762) she sees such bewilderment directly expressed: “God said to the angels: ‘I wish to create creatures on earth and place a khalīfa there.’ At that time God had no creatures except the angels, and there were no creatures on earth.”

333 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1. 450. Said Nursi also supports this view. For more see Nursi, İşārât ül-İ’caz, 175.
There is however already an effort to prevent Adam from any attempt of creating chaos on earth. Instead, the ones who will shed corruption will be his offspring as a view by Ibn Sābiṭ noted in Ṭabarī’s work maintains. Ibn ʿAbbās follows him in the same vein by stating, “God said to the angels: ‘I am about to place a khalīfa on earth.’ They said: ‘Our Lord, what will this khalīfa be?’ He said: ‘He will have offspring who will work corruption on earth, and envy each other and kill each other.’”

Interestingly, Ibn Kathīr mentions that the khalīfa phrase was also read as khaliqa (creation) and that Zamakhsharī and other exegetes have also offered such an alternative reading. The fact that earlier commentators considered it possible to read khalīfa as khaliqa could indicate that they considered this a way out of the difficulty of understanding the precise meaning of khalīfa in the Adam context. With khaliqa such a problem seems to be circumvented. This is a good example of the main principle of textual criticism, namely lectio difficilior potior (Latin for “the more difficult reading is the stronger”). Since khalīfa is universal, it is safe to say that khaliqa is the more uncommon reading.

Nabīh Amīn Fāris argues in his essay Khalīfa or Khaliqa: A Variant Reading of Sura 2:28 that a number of mistakes found their way into the qur’ānic manuscript. When al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf was overseeing the introduction of diacritical signs, the writers falsely placed one point

338 Al-Ṭabarī, Ḥāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 452.
over a letter instead of two or vice versa.\textsuperscript{341} He prefers \textit{khalīqa} since this reading allows for the children of Adam (\textit{banī Ādam}) to be included properly. Looking from a holistic perspective to the Qur’anic creation accounts however and considering the various reports, the phrase \textit{khalīfa} can stand and was in fact endorsed by the majority of the commentators—classical and modern. 

There is however another possible explanation for why some of the early Qur’an commentators did not provide any answers to the question of whom this \textit{khalīfa} was supposed to succeed. Such a choice did not have to have a connection with the Umayyad rulers and giving them support. As al-Qāḍī speculates, it could be that the title \textit{khalīfat Allāh} was so well-known that exegetes did not waste time to explain what it meant. Since all people in the Qur’an are identified as \textit{khulafā’}, the political leader was not excluded from it. The application of the title to him was not an unusual thing.\textsuperscript{342} Al-Qāḍī might be right with her theory when considering W. Montgomery Watt’s findings about an inscription which is from the year 543 CE found in South Arabia. Based on this, he concludes that the term \textit{khalīfa} was wide in use and that it often referred to “deputy” or “vicegerent.” According to Watt, the later Arabic meaning was also influenced by this word. However, he does not believe that \textit{khalīfa} in the Adam and David verses means viceroy.\textsuperscript{343}

To continue with the second meaning of \textit{khalīfa} as it appears in the Adam context, later exegetes like Ṭabarī did employ the meaning of God’s vicegerent—\textit{khalīfat Allāh}. This is evident in his interpretation based on the traditions of Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd (d. 34/654) when he


\textsuperscript{342} Al-Qāḍī, “The Term ‘Khalīfa’ in Early Exegetical Literature,” 411.

says, “God informed the angels that He was putting someone in His place (khalīfa, = vicegerent) on earth to judge between His creatures according to His judgment.” And in another instance he goes on to state that,

"[God said] ‘I am about to place a vicegerent of Mine on earth to act on My behalf (yakhlufunī) in judging between My creatures.’ This vicegerent was Adam and those who took his place among the servants of God. He [Ibn ‘Abbās] ascribed corruption and the shedding of blood to the offspring of His vicegerent, and He excluded the latter from it."

Within the Qur’anic framework as a whole and also in this particular instance, there is sufficient evidence that humanity—with Adam as its representative progenitor—is meant to be God’s khalīfa, despite human nature being vulnerable to error and corruption. The Qur’an is full of statements calling humankind to its responsibility to be caretakers of the creation and to act in God’s name and favor. Over and over the Qur’an tells humanity that the earth and all of its blessings were created for humankind’s benefit and that they should conduct themselves according to divine guidance.

This is also supported by a statement of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 24/644) mentioned in Qatādah’s commentary. In this commentary on Q 10:14 which reads, “Later We made you their khalāʾifa, to see how you [plural] would behave,” Qatādah mentions a report on the authority of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, in which ‘Umar said, “Our Lord spoke the truth. He did not make us khulafāʾ except in order to see how [we carry on with] our deeds. Thus, show (pl.) God the goodness of your deeds by night and day, in secret and in public.” It is obvious that ‘Umar

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344 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 452.
345 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 452.
considered all people to be *khulafā’* which seems to be the appropriate understanding in line with a holistic approach to the Qur’an. It seems difficult to understand it only as referring to the Muslim political leaders or caliphs.

That the Qur’an itself does not limit the notion of *khalīfa* to a formal political role is evident from the *khalīfa* passages with one possible exception of the David verse. Al-Qāḍī notes however that “most exegetes considered the David verse as referring to David alone and not to ‘people in authority’ in general.” While this study does not take into consideration the Prophetic traditions on this matter, further analysis of *hadīth* material could support such an interpretation. For now, we confine ourselves to the Qur’anic view only which clearly suggests that the phrase has much wider implications.

In turning more specifically to the interpretive community, many classic and modern Qur’an commentators support the view that the term *khalīfa* refers not only to Adam but by extension to all humanity, i.e. the children of Adam. In the following, I cite briefly those Qur’an commentators who favored the opinion that Adam is the *khalīfat Allāh*, the vicegerent of God and those who slowly moved to apply the term not only to him but to humankind as a whole. It then becomes evident that the elevation of humanity to being “vicegerents of God” on earth found its strongest articulation in the modern period. To reiterate, the overall objective is to demonstrate that the term *khalīfa* lends itself as a foundational element for constructing a theology of migration.

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347 Al-Qāḍī, “Caliph,” 278.
Among the classical exegetes who see in God’s declaration of appointing a khalīfa an indication of humanity’s high status is Ibn Kathīr. He states, “God reiterated His favor on the children of Adam when He stated that He mentioned them in the heighest of heights before He created them (al-malāʾa al-aʿlā)”. Ibn Kathīr argues further that the word khalīfa here refers not only to Adam but also to his progeny. He bases his argument on the angels’ question, “How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?” The angels must probably think of the sins committed by other people because Adam as the first prophet cannot be the one who creates corruption on earth. Ibn Kathīr articulates here a belief which became a standard formula of Islamic prophetology—the notion of the sinlessness of messengers (isma). Some actions were deemed to be a great sin (kabīra) and thus not befitting for a messenger. This left the exegete with the possibility to defer such actions to those children of Adam who do not follow divine guidance.

In quoting the Andalusian scholar al-Qurṭūbī (d. 671/1272) who narrates a report from Zayd ibn ‘Alī stating that the phrase khalīfa applies to all humankind, Ibn Kathīr aims to substantiate his position.

Following qur’anic passages are cited by him to demonstrate that the title khalīfa applies equally to all human beings: Q 6:165, “It is He who made you khalāʾīfa on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you. Your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is most forgiving and merciful.” Q 27:62, “Who is it that answers the

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distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you *khulafāʿ* `a in the earth? Is it another god beside God? Little notice you take!” Q 43:60, “If it had been Our will, We could have made you angels, succeeding one another (*yakhlufūna*) on earth.” Q 19:59, “But there came after them generations (*fā-khalafa min baʾdihim khalfun*) who neglected prayer and were driven by their own desires. These will come face to face with their evil.”

In furthering his point, Ibn Kathīr cites Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq’s (d. 150/767) opinion which Ṭabarī had early on discarded from the beginning in his own *tafsīr.* Khalīfa in that sense means “one who would dwell on it [the earth] and cultivate it, causing it to flourish and filling it with inhabitants (*sākinan wa ʿāmiran yaʾmuruhā wa yaskunuhā*).)” The same interpretation comes through in his commentary on Q 6:165 cited above when he states, “He made you cultivate it (*yaʾmurūnahā*) generation after generation, century after century, from ancestors to descendants.” Lane gives the example of *ʿamara al-arda,* “He peopled the land; stocked it well with people and camels and the like; colonized it; cultivated it; or cultivated it well; rendered it in a flourishing state, or in a state the contrary of waste.”

Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), a Muʿtazilite exegete, endorses the first meaning of *khalīfa,* namely that Adam and his children were sent to earth to replace the angels who had previously inhabited it. Then he moves on to consider the second possibility, “It possibly means that [God] was saying, ‘I want someone to be My *khalīfā,*’ because Adam was God’s *khalīfā* on His earth—and the same goes for all the prophets—for We

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355 Lane, Book I, 2154.
have made you a *khalīfa* on the earth.*"\(^{356}\) The latter part of this statement refers to the David verse in Q 38:26, “David, We have made you *khalifatan*\(^{357}\) in the earth. Judge fairly between people. Do not follow your desires, lest they divert you from God’s path: those who wander from His path will have a painful torment because they ignore the Day of Reckoning.” Though Zamakhsharī seems less confident in applying the phrase *khalifat Allāh* to all of Adam’s progeny, he nevertheless grants Adam and other prophets this designation. This comes through in his commentary on the David verse when he claims that God chose David as His vicegerent (*istakhlafa*) over the kingdom (*mulk*) of the earth.\(^{358}\)

When it comes to humanity as a whole being God’s vicegerents, another famous Muʿtazilite scholar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) seems to espouse the view that the term *khalīfa* transfers to all of Adam’s offspring if my reading of his interpretations is correct. There seems to be a certain ambivalence in his explanations on whether the term *khalīfa* applies by extension to all human beings. In his work *Mafātīh al-Ghayb* (“Keys to the Unseen”), also known as *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, one finds first listed the different opinions on the question of to whom the title *khalīfa* applies. He mentions that the title *khalīfa* either refers to Adam or to his descendants and that the former had been sent to judge among His creation. The David verse in Q 38:26 is also transferred here to Adam.

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\(^{357}\) Abdel Haleem translates *khalifatan fī al-ard* as “mastery over the land.” For the sake of clarity, I will go here with the original Arabic form.

Rāzī comments on Q 2:30 as follows, “I know that this verse points to the way in which Adam (upon whom be peace) was created and to the way in which God (may He be extolled) exalted him. This also represented a general pouring out of [divine] favor on all of his descendants.” For Rāzī *khalīfa* denotes someone “who succeeds or takes the place of another.” In support of his view, he quotes these qur’anic verses: Q 10:14, “Later We made you their *khalīfah* in the land, to see how you would behave,” Q 7:74, “Remember, how He made you *khulafāʾ* after ʿĀd and settled you in the land to build yourselves forts on its plains and carve houses out of the mountains: remember God’s blessings and do not spread corruption in the land.” At the end, he says that God placed humankind as His vicegerents on earth and that the term *khalīfa* applies equally to women and men. Like Ibn Kathīr, he quotes Q 6:165 cited earlier to underline this idea. In a similar vein, he does not assign the spreading of corruption to Adam but to his descendants.

The famous Nāṣir al-Dīn Abī Saʿīd ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUmar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 684-85/1286) does not provide much additional data to the previous assessment. In his commentary on Q 2:30 Bayḍāwī writes that humanity received great honor from God who sent three blessings to people, “Adam’s creation, the honoring of his person [through his vicegerency], and his preferences over the angels, as they were ordered to bow before him, a bestowal of grace that include his descendants.” In going on to explain what a *khalīfa* is, Bayḍāwī gives the following

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characterization: It is “someone who succeeds someone else, who acts as someone else’s representative (yanūbu manābahu).” That this title is meant for Adam is clear because in Bayḍāwī’s words “he was God’s khalīfa on earth, as well as every Prophet God made his vicegerent (istakhla’ahum) for the sake of cultivating the earth (fi īmarāt al-ard), the management of people’s affairs (siyāsat al-nās), the perfecting of their souls and the application of [God’s] command among them.”

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It is in the esoteric tradition or Sufi commentaries of Qur’anic exegesis that one finds an even more elevated status of humanity as being vicegerents of God. The great synthesizer of the rationalist, traditionalist and mystical schools, Imam Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) argued earlier than many other exegetes in his Al-Iḥyāʾ ‘ulūm al-dīn that the Qur’anic khalīfa designates all human beings as representatives of God on earth. Ghazālī also employs the well-known ḥadīth saying that “God created Adam according to His image” (fa inna l-Allāh khalaqa Ādama ‘alā ṣūratīhi).

Following Ghazālī’s line of thought Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Nizām al-Dīn al-Aʿrāj al-Nīsābūrī (d. 730/1328/29) also had no hesitation in claiming directly that humankind is God’s vicegerent and that people have been given authority and power by God to

362 Al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, Vol.1, 68. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 298.
363 Al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, Vol.1, 68. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 298.
365 Al-Ghazālī, Al-Iḥyāʾ, 306-307. This ḥadīth appears in the collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal. See for example Bukhārī, Book 8, Vol.74, Hadith 246 http://www.quranexplorer.com/hadith/english/index.html. There is also another ḥadīth using the word ṣūra (“form, image”) for the image of God in humans. It says “‘alā ṣūratī l-Rahmān”. Muslims theologians have interpreted these ḥadīth in different ways. For more details see Dirk Bakker, Man in the Qur’an (Amsterdam: Drukkerij Holland N.V., 1965), 26.
rule over this world. In fact, God gave a share of His divine attributes to humanity so that they can display and act upon them in the world as proper representatives. The spirit acquires illumination through mirroring the divine names and “when man’s lamp is so illuminated with the fire of the light of God, he becomes God’s vicegerent in His earth, manifesting the light of His attributes in this world through justice, well doing, compassion, mercy, kindliness, and domination.”

When looking into Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī’s thoughts on Adam’s vicegerency, one encounters following declaration, “Man is My vicegerent forming his character according to My character, and is known by My characteristics. He executes My command and rules over My creatures – managing their affairs, organizing their government, and calling them to obedience to Me.” He states further that the human being based on the nature of his creation is a synthesis of the material/earthly world and the realm of the unseen. The spirit (rūḥ) is an element from the world of the unknown whereas the soul or ego (nafs) is mostly concerned with the affairs of this world. Within this understanding, Ibn ʿArabī often employed the well-known hadith qudsī, “I [God] was a hidden treasure and wanted to be known, therefore I created the world (kuntu kanzan li ʿarafu fa ahbabtu an ʿarafu fa khalaqtu khalqan fa arifathum bī fa ʿarifūnī).”

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368 Al-ʿArabī, Tafsīr, Vol.1, 36.
369 The “hidden treasure” hadīth is central to the mystical thought of the Sufis but also appears frequently in non-Sufi circles as for example in the works of Said Nursi. It is one of the most commonly quoted ahādīth which vary in their degree of authenticity. The famous hadīth scholar Ḥasan al-ʿAjlūnī al-Jarrāḥī (d. 1162/1748 or 49) states, “Ibn Taymiyya says, ‘It [the hadīth] is not from the words of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant
In this sense, the human being is the only creation that can reflect God’s qualities in the most beautiful way though still limited. We will discuss this point in some more detail in the section of the “divine names.” As was the case with Imam Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī also brings into his discussion the ḥadīth of the image (ṣūra) of God in humanity. According to William Chittick, vicegerency and to be created according to God’s image meant for Ibn ʿArabī to display the entirety of the divine names and attributes. While the cosmos with its various parts only mirrors fragments of the divine form, human beings are able to be manifestations (tajallī) of the entirety of God’s form. To be God’s servant and vicegerent depends hence to the degree to which one aspires to be God’s mirror in displaying the divine qualities. 370 Again, we will come back to this point later in the section on the “divine names.”

In his commentary Kashf al-ʿAsrār wa ʿUdda al-ʿAbrār (“The Unveiling of the Mysteries and the Provision of the Pious”)–the most important exegetical work in Persian–the Sufi and theologian Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybudī (d. 520/1126) also regards Adam and all humankind on an exalted status representing God on earth and ruling over the created empire. He writes,

It was not that He [God] was consulting with the angels. Rather, He was laying the foundation of Adam’s exaltation and tremendousness. He was not asking for help, but spreading the carpet of Adam’s dignity. He was saying, ‘The ruling

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property of My severity has acted. I have commanded the pen of generosity to write out a script from the beginning of the world’s ledger to its end. This resolution is written for the inhabitants of both worlds, from the top of the Throne to the bottom of the Carpet: ‘The dust-dwelling Adam is granted chieftainship over all the empires. His exalted breast will be bright with the light of recognition. In him the subtleties of My generosity and the artifacts of My bounteousness will become apparent.’

It is however important to mention, that there is also, in Sufi experience and teaching, a sense of a khalīfah as a successor. The agents of Sufi shaykhs and also the successors as tariqa leaders of followers of the major shaykhs in many Sufi order have the title of khalīfah. As such, this usage of khalīfah as successor in Sufism as well as in politics is noteworthy. Nonetheless, the general interpretive tendency in the esoteric tradition confirms the idea that khalīfa denotes the meaning of being a vicegerent of God.

The previous sketch of some examples of exegetical work from the classical period is by no means a full fletched assessment of the notion of khalīfa as it appears in that era. Certainly, I have only scratched the surface and do not claim to have offered an exhaustive analysis. What has become obvious however is that many exegetes did apply the title khalīfat Allāh to Adam and also regarded this as a bestowal of honor and glory on Adam’s descendants. If one turns to the modern period, it becomes evident that by the end of the 19th century the understanding that every human being is a vicegerent of God had gained general acceptance among Muslims.

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372 For more on the use of khalīfa in Sufi circles see Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 253.
373 Steppat, “God’s Deputy,” 166.
This consensus among Muslims continues to be reflected throughout the 20th century up until the post-modern period of our day.

I shall mention in passing though that the idea of the caliphate either as a religio-political institution or being interpreted in an exclusive manner restricted only to Muslims was still favored by some thinkers like Sayyid Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (d. 1399/1979) or Sayyid Quṭb (d.1385/1966) in his *tafsīr* work *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʿān*. The former understood the *khilāfa* as taken up by the Islamic state and the body of Muslims who collectively perform the *khalīfa* duties based on *sharīʿa* law. The latter believed that all of humanity has been given the mandate for vicegerency but that the full mission of *khilāfa* is reserved for the Muslim community. While many Muslims today would not opt for a re-establishment of the caliphate, there is no doubt that such a dream still persists in the minds of some Muslims.

In the following however, I shall illustrate on the basis of three exegetical works from the modern period that the concept of vicegerency was applied to all human beings: Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s (d. 1353/1935), *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-Ḥakīm al-Mushtahir bi-ismi Tafsīr al-Manār* or in short, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and the two widespread commentaries in Turkey, namely Muḥammed Hamdi Yazır’s (also known as Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır) *Hak Dini Kurʾan Dili* (d. 1360/1942) and Said Nursi’s (d. 1379/1960) *Risale-i Nur* will be useful examples to underline this aspect.

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374 For a brief discussion on their thoughts on the caliphate being an institution limited only to Muslims see Johnston, *Earth, Empire and Sacred Text*, 365-378.
Let us turn first to Riḍā’s famous *Tafsīr al-Manār* as one prime example of this development. As a disciple of the reformer Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1322/1905), Riḍā’s commentary is based on ʿAbduh’s teachings. When commenting on the notion of *khalīfa* in Q 2:30, ʿAbduh is quick to discard the one meaning of *khalīfa*, namely Adam succeeding the *jinn* or angels on earth. Instead, he describes the *khalīfa* in a straightforward manner as God’s vicegerent on earth. He states, “I [God] am placing a vicegerent for Myself (*khalīfatan ʿannī*), and because of this the conviction spread that humanity was God’s vicegerent on earth.”  

According to ʿAbduh, the term *khalīfa* applies by extension to all human beings and not only to prophets, caliphs or kings. For him, the vicegerency denotes the capacity of human free will and reason and hence being equipped with the potential to rule over the creation.

One of the widely read Qur’an commentaries in the Turkish context and the diaspora is Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır’s *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili* (“The qur’anic Language of the True Religion”) published first under the directive of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1935. His commentary on Q 2:30 and specifically his interpretation of *khalīfa* is very short as follows:

I [God] will indeed create a vicegerent on earth, and I will appoint him as a vicegerent. I will give him some share of My will (*irade*), power (*kudret*) and attributes (*sifat*). By relying on Me and being My trustee (*vekil*), he will have some authority over My creation and will judge on My behalf. He will not be acting on his own. He is only My trustee (*vekil*) and My substitute (*kalfam*). With his will, he enacts My will, My orders (*emir*) and My laws. Those who come after him and who will be his successor (*halef*) will abide by the same guidelines.

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Yazır then quotes Q 35:39 in support of his interpretation, “It is He who made you vicegerents (khalāʾifā) in the land. Those who deny the truth will bear the consequences: their denial will only make them more odious to their Lord, and will only add to their loss.” He then quickly concludes that this has been widely discussed by the various exegetical works which have taken into consideration the different traditions narrated by the companions (aṣḥāb) and the following generation (tābiʿīn). He therefore sees no need to offer more details on the subject but maintains that the khilāfa is generally assumed by all people and that God shared His divine qualities with every being.

One needs to keep in mind that the caliphate as a political reality was abolished by Atatürk himself, who, as noted earlier, demanded the publication of this qur’anic exegesis. It is therefore very unlikely that Yazır would have entertained the question whether the khilāfa applies to one ruler or not. He would then probably have gotten into conflict with the new establishment. One might only speculate that this could be one reason why he kept the reflection on khilāfa so brief.

In his Risale-i Nur, Said Nursi establishes a connection between the preceding verse Q 2:29 and the one in question, Q 2:30. Q 2:29 reads, “It was He who created all that is on the earth for you, then turned to the sky and made the seven heavens: it is He who has knowledge of all things.” He notes that while this verse tells the audience that God created everything in the earth for humankind, the passage in Q 2:30 points out that “man is God’s vicegerent on the earth and is its ruler.”⁴⁸⁰ According to Nursi, Q 2:29 also indicates that the greatest bounty bestowed on

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⁴⁸⁰ Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 342.
humans is being the fruit of creation and all on earth being subjugated to them for them to dispose of as they wish. As he explains in numerous instances in his *Risale*, being the fruit of creation is to be a microcosm of the whole universe. Being on the highest stage of life, humans stand in the center of the universe which works for humanity. The constellation of the stars, the minerals, the animals, the trees etc. – in sum, everything in the cosmos is created in the most beneficial way for humans. This is why Nursi believes that all in the cosmos serves the human being whom he therefore regards as the fruit of creation. In his treatise on the meaning of life and the divine name *al-Ḥayy*, the Living, he reflects on humankind whom he regards as the most intense and greatest reflection of this divine name *al-Ḥayy*. While every being in the creation reflects a degree of this name, human beings in their emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual capacity display life in the most intensive and extraordinary way. This is why he terms humanity as the fruit of creation because no other being benefits from the universe like the human being.  

To his mind, the notion of *khalīfa* in Q 2:30 expounds, explains, elucidates, verifies, proves and corroborates what the previous verse states, namely that God has given authority to humans to rule over the earth. That the term *khalīfa* applies to all of humanity is obvious in his writings. For instance, in his Twentieth Word reflecting on the miracle of Prophet Adam, Nursi states,

*O Children of Adam! Since as a proof of their superiority over the angels in the question of the vicegerency, I taught your forefather all the Names, you too, since you are his children (*evlâd*) and the inheritors of his abilities (*vâris-i istidades*), you*

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382 Nursi, *İşârât ül-I’caz*, 342.
should learn all the Names and in your position as holder of the Supreme Trust (emanet-i kübrâ) demonstrate before all creatures your worthiness. For the way is open to you to rise to exalted rank such as holding the highest positions over all beings in the universe, and for vast creatures like the earth to be subjected to you. Come on, step forward, adhere to all My Names and rise.”

In another passage discussing the miracle of Prophet Solomon, Nursi once again reiterates that vicegerency extends to all humankind, “And since I [God] have given all human beings the innate capacity to be vicegerent (halife) of the earth, I gave them also the ability to see, consider, and understand the whole face of the earth in accordance with that ability, for My wisdom requires this.” He then concludes that individuals might not reach that state but humankind as a collective community may reach it. And as a last word he says: “If individuals do not reach that point, men may reach it as a race. And if they do not reach it physically, the saints (ehl-i velâyet) may reach it in meaning.” It is not entirely clear what Nursi means by this statement but his celebration of human dignity and its important role in the universe is certainly visible.

In his references to the notion of khalîfa or human vicegerency, Nursi frequently employs terms like hilâfet-i kübrâ (the greatest vicegerency) in denoting the great responsibility vicegerency places on human beings, halife-i arz (vicegerent on earth), halife-i zemin (vicegerent on earth) or halife-i mânevî (from the Arabic ma’nawî). In the English translation of the Risale-i Nur, halife-i mânevî is rendered as “spiritual vicegerent.” This can be a problematic term

385 Nurî, Sözler, 348.
due to its connotations in the Western context and the often raised distinction between spiritual but not religious. It is difficult though to find another alternative for mânevi. As explained in the Twentieth Word of the Risale-i Nur, halife-i mânevi means that human beings are given the Trust – the capacity to exploit, develop and put to good use the earth and all that is on it.\textsuperscript{387} In the Twenty-Eighth letter, Nursi explains that it also means to comprehend with the potentialities given to humanity all the varieties of the manifestations of the divine names in the universe.\textsuperscript{388}

To stand in the rank (rütbe) of a khalîfa means that all human deeds and actions due to their importance will be carefully preserved (muhafaza) or recorded by God and will be ultimately weighed (muhasebe) on the grand scale of divine justice (adalet terazisi) in the hereafter in order to receive punishment (ceza) or recompense (mükâfat) for human conduct on earth.\textsuperscript{389} This for Nursi is only a logical consequence, since everything in the universe, from tiny atoms to the sun, is created according to a divine order and balance (nizam and mizan) and often like seeds preserved for the next seasons.\textsuperscript{390} By referring to such a natural theology, Nursi aims to underline that the most developed of all beings in the hierarchy of creation – the human being – cannot simply assume that his/her moral conduct on earth is outside such an expansive system and that it will not be observed and judged by God.

While many early classical exegetes like Ibn Kathîr did not offer much explanation on the nature of being a khalîfa, Nursi and other modern commentators provide more advice on what it means to carry that title. The khalîfa for him is also a minister for the preservation of the created

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  \item \textsuperscript{387} Nursi, Sözler, 334.
  \item \textsuperscript{388} Nursi, Mektubat (Istanbul: Söz Publications, 2007), 510.
  \item \textsuperscript{389} Nursi, Risale-i Nur Küliyatı, Vol.1, 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{390} Nursi, Risale-i Nur Küliyatı, Vol.1, 34.
\end{itemize}
Here, the superiority of human beings is emphasized in terms of being able to oversee, serve and preserve God’s creation. In other words, while the value of humanity is affirmed, the door to arrogance and haughtiness is closed. Humanity stands above creation only as long as it is able to be its proper caretaker. In having received a share of God’s divine qualities, humankind is able to carry out the enormous task of being God’s vicegerent.

At the end of his Eleventh Word, Nursi summarizes the duties of a trustworthy khalīfa on earth (halife-i arz). A brief illustration of only six of these is as follows: First, it is to acclaim and glorify God’s greatness (tekbir and tesbih) when witnessing divine beauty and lordship (rububiyyet) through His creation. Second, it is to be a herald (dellāl) in acclaiming God’s glory by seeing His brilliant and wonderful works, which are a dim reflection of His beautiful qualities. It is to perform the duty of hallowing and praising God. Third, it is to understand, with both one’s inner and outer senses, the bounties of God as a manifestation of His mercy. As a response, the khalīfa offers thanks and praise. Fourth, it is to weigh up with the scales of one’s spiritual faculties the meanings of the divine names and declaring God to be free of all shortcomings. Fifth, it is to study God’s letters (mektûbât-i Rabbâniye), His communication with humankind through creation and to be absorbed in contemplation (tefekkür) and appreciation (istihsan). Sixth, it is to behold the subtle, delicate, fine beauties in the artistics creation of things and take up the duty of love (muhabbet) and yearning (iştiyak) for God.

In certain ways, these six duties resemble each other but what is expressed is not only the call to be a contemplative believer and observer through the inner human spiritual senses and

emotions, but also to display the divine attributes in a physical and pro-active manner. For instance, those who have reflected on the meaning of God’s generosity and mercy in the universe, are now invited to actively display this divine name of al-Karīm (the Most Generous One) in their own life by showing emotional and material generosity to fellow beings. We will have to come back to this in more detail in the section on God’s teaching Adam the names. For now, suffice it to say that for Nursi the notion of khalīfa is a central concept in his theological anthropology and a key element in one’s human identity.

Further, to become a true khalīfa on earth (halife-i zemin) it is to enlighten one’s intellectual capacities (akıl) by following the Qur’anic guidance and Prophetic sunna. Such adherence will then transform human weakness (acz) and impotence (fakr), which make humans inferior to all other beings, into a powerful means of leading the creation.\textsuperscript{393} What is meant here is that once human beings embrace their vulnerability and rely on God who is the source of strength and power, their impotence and weakness become the bridge with which they connect to the divine. In that sense, weakness becomes an intercessor at the divine court and human beings are able to draw on the power of God in order to fulfill their duty of vicegerency.

In another aspect, for Nursi the cosmic dialogue involving the angels, and implicitly the human being, shows the inherent connectedness of the two worlds – the earth and the realm of the unseen (al-ghayb) – a matter which we have addressed earlier in the discussion of the heavens and earth. Nursi calls this interconnectedness the chain of “beings with spirits” (zevil

\textsuperscript{393} Nursi, \textit{Risale-i Nur Külliyati}, Vol.1, 92.
ervah). Once again, human beings are not simply reduced to an earthly existence but have deep affiliations with the heavenly realm. Their identity thus surpasses territorial notions and is expanded. The notion that the degree of appropriate vicegerency on earth will have an effect on one’s state in the hereafter – the unseen dimension – is hence reiterated.

Contemporary Muslim scholars like Muhammad Asad, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Azizah Y. al-Hibri, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and many others share the same view that all human beings are vicegerents of God and caretakers of the earth called to act according to His guidance. Nasr for instance states the following about the notion of khalīfa, “Islam sees men and women as God’s vicegerents on earth. Therefore, in the same way that God has power over His creation but is also sustainer and protector, human beings must also combine power over nature with responsibility for its protection and sustenance.” This God-given power or worth was generally not understood by Muslim theologians as meaning that human beings could claim ultimate superiority over other beings and exploit the universe according to their whims and desires. The superiority is often understood as the innate intellectual, emotional and physical capacities with which God has equipped the human being. Humanity is hence called to act responsibly within the universe.

The previous brief assessment of Muslim scholarly reflection from the classical and modern periods on the concept of khalīfa demonstrates only too well that the qur’anic phrase in

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394 Nursi, Ịşârât ụl-I’caz, 342.
396 Nasr, The Heart of Islam, 142-43.
Q 2:30 has undergone a dynamic interpretive process. While in the classical period Muslims were still reflecting over the question of whether the term can be applied to Adam at all, and whether it was of general application or was reserved to political leaders, the modern period tended to move away from these concerns. Some scholars have argued that the theological disputes about the nature of God and humans cautioned Muslims to shy away from any formulations which resembled anthropomorphism. Others observed that through the rise of modernity and the witnessing of scientific and technological progress of humanity, Muslim thinkers became increasingly confident in regarding individual human empowerment and free will as a central feature of being a khalīfa. Some have also noted that the socio-political climate in the modern era during which the abolition of the caliphate was initiated might have had an impact on the interpretive process in this regard. To establish a more democratic and egalitarian society, the notion of khalīfa did lend itself to such conceptions. On the basis of other qur’anic khalīfa verses, those Muslim scholars had therefore no hesitation in applying the term to all human beings and assigning to every individual the capacity to manifest certain divine traits and attributes.

While the context – pretext – text dynamic certainly plays a role for the interpreter in his approach to scriptural hermeneutics, it is difficult to make any conclusive observations. As Wilfred Cantwill Smith notes, qur’anic passages, like any other scriptures, have meant many

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different things to many different people at different times and places. The relationship to the Qur’an has been conditioned by the historical situation and by everyone’s own social, cultural and intellectual background. This reality has given way to different interpretations as we can observe from the great number of *tafsīr* works. 399

What is certain is that the term *khalīfa* was used in both of these two ways: for an exclusive and hierarchical interpretation limiting the term only to prophets, caliphs and Muslims, and for a second open, egalitarian interpretation that assigns the term by extension to all humanity. I join the views of Muslim exegetes who have favored the second interpretive dimension based on a holistic reading of the Qur’an. The universal message of the Qur’an assigns a special role and responsibility to all human beings and calls them to important tasks to carry out their duty as *khalīfa*. Such an understanding has somewhat reached a community consensus. The Qur’an itself does not limit the term to a political leadership role and those who have done so did because of self-interest. In fact, the role of the *khalīfa* as a political leader only emerged after Prophet Muhammad had passed away and as seen in Walīd II letter, such politicization of Qur’anic terms was all too common in the era after the Prophet. In order to make *khalīfa* a constructive element of an Islamic theology of migration – addressing migrant and host – it needs to be applied uncompromisingly to humankind as a whole which in fact many of the Qur’anic exegetes did. The unshaken fundamental dignity of human life and the call to be an active and responsible individual can be established by reflecting on what it means to be a *khalīfa*.

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In Q 2:30 we can observe that the narrative first employs the dual and then the plural form. It is therefore easy to argue that the whole moral of the creation story is addressed to the entire human family. While all of the discourse about Adam and his wife is in the grammatical dual mode, addressed to two people, the command to “go down” in Q 2:36 and Q 2:38 (\textit{uhbiṭū}) is in the plural. As Bodman notes, commentators differ whether this particular command applies to Adam, his wife, and \textit{al-shaytān}, or whether this applies to all of the future progeny of Adam.\footnote{Bodman, \textit{Poetics of Iblīs}, 233.} Considering however that \textit{khalīfa}, as noted earlier, is equally used in the Qur’an for the children of Adam, it is safe to say that the title also applies to his progeny.

But what does it mean in concrete terms to be a \textit{khalīfa} of God? We will defer this question to our discussion on “Teaching the Names” since the notion of \textit{khalīfa} is inextricably intertwined with the concept of the divine names. For Abdulaziz Sachedina, this particular term – \textit{khalīfa} – establishes from the very beginning the ultimate duty of humanity.\footnote{Sachedina, “Human Vicegerency,” 31.} God will equip humanity with the extraordinary potential to be His representatives on earth and care for creation. God’s will is clearly laid out. In the case of \textit{khalīfa}, it means a being who represents and thus has the powers of another being. For now, it is important to keep in mind that this account demonstrates again the fundamental dignity, value and trust God places in each human being. God Himself chooses and assigns humanity as His vicegerents for the entire earth and not to one specific locality. The potential of human beings is God-given. The destructive potential of humanity notwithstanding, God Himself has endowed the human being with all the physical and
emotional skills, faculties and abilities to carry out important and diverse tasks and in every communal and societal context.

4.2 The Objection of the Angels

They [the angels] said, ‘How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your holiness?’ But He said, ‘Indeed, I know that what you do not know. (Qur’an 2:30)

The vicegerency can also be abused and misused by humanity, which brings us to the fourth element in this Qu’ranic instance – the objection of the angels. This element appears for the first time in the seven Qur’anic narratives under investigation here.

The cosmic dialogue between God and the angels once again underlines the fundamental dignity of human life and answers the question of whether human beings should be considered a “burden or benefit” for society as often discussed in the contemporary migration debate. It clearly demonstrates that the value or “benefit” of human beings outweighs the negative aspects of their existence. This becomes clear when we turn again to the commentarial tradition in analyzing this cosmic dialogue between the heavenly council and God.

Interestingly, this instance has a parallel in Jewish Midrash in which it is said that God engages the angels in this conversation to teach the audience the merit of consultation, proper conduct and humility. Further, human beings were “created in the likeness of angels” in some ways and therefore the appearance of the human being causes some envy among the angels.402

402 See Rashi’s commentary on Genesis 1:26: “Let Us make man: From here we learn the humility of the Holy One, blessed be He. Since man was created in the likeness of the angels, and they would envy him, He consulted them.
As will become evident, many Muslim exegetes are quick to discard envy as an interpretation of the angelic response. In early Islamic history Muslim scholars disputed about the exact nature of the angels. As in Ibn Kathîr’s work, one often notices an attempt to preserve the now traditional Islamic understanding that angels do not rebel against God’s decree and have a pure nature free from any negative emotions.\(^{403}\)

The angels’ complaint points to the destructive potential of the human being. As Bodman notes, the angelic objection has led to much reflection by qur’anic exegetes.\(^{404}\) The major focus of this interpretive discussion was the nature of the angels and their ability to access divine knowledge. Where did the angels receive the information that human beings can act in destructive ways? More importantly, can angels object the divine decree?\(^{405}\)

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\(^{404}\) Bodman, *Poetics of Iblîs*, 222.

\(^{405}\) Bodman, *Poetics of Iblîs*, 223.
To begin with, Al-Ṭabarī narrates a tradition by Ibn ʿAbbās coming via al-Ḍāḥēk stating that God addressed only one group of angels and not all of them. This was the fraction of angels called *al-Hinn* which had fought with Iblīs against the group of *jinn* which had revolted against God on earth. God made His proclamation as a specific test and trial for them so that they should know their deficiency in knowledge, and the superiority over them of other beings who were more weakly built than they. This aspect of putting the angels on trial is also reiterated in a report by Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 149/767) mentioned by Ṭabarī.⁴⁰⁶ Further, God’s favor is not bestowed according to bodily power or strength, as Iblīs had supposed. The angels’ response, according to Ibn ʿAbbās was a mistake on their part, a guess about the Unknown.

In citing another tradition going back to Ibn ʿAbbās through Ibn Masʿūd and a group of other companions, Ṭabarī interprets it as saying that God had told the angels what some of the offspring of His vicegerent would do on earth. Yet, He kept concealed from them the information that many of Adam’s descendants would obey their Lord, establish order on His earth, and spare lives, and that He would elevate their station and prestige due to that. By giving His divine response, God denied the all-inclusiveness and generality of what the angels said about the human being.⁴⁰⁷

A third tradition appearing in Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr* goes back to Qatāda (d. 116/735) who interprets the angels’ questioning as God teaching the angels the art of consultation (*shūra*). This aspect of consultation is also noted in the report by Ibn Ishāq.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, Qatāda also removes

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all general claims of corruption and destructive habits from the children of Adam by claiming, “For God knew that prophets, messengers, righteous people, and dwellers in the Garden would be descended from this vicegerent.” Al-Ḥasan al- Başrī (d.109/728) in a similar vein maintains that the angels were not given all of God’s knowledge and that they therefore could not know the full nature of the human being. Another report by al-Rabī’ bin Anas states that the angels knew that God had preferred Adam over them with respect to knowledge and honor (karam).  

In offering his own concluding thoughts on these reports, al-Ṭabarī argues that the angels did not aim to contest the decision of God even though they were troubled by the notion that this being would disobey God. Rather, their question was meant as an inquiry meaning, “Teach us, our Lord, are You going to place someone with this attribute, and are You not going to place a vicegerent from among us, who proclaim Your praise and call You holy?” Overall, one discovers in the reports enumerated by al-Ṭabarī a lofty view of humanity freed from the assignment of collective crime and destructive behavior on earth. Humankind’s general value clearly weighs heavier and cannot be diminished by the anarchy and lawlessness of a few.

In turning to Ibn Kathīr, we find a similar stream of ideas. In critiquing other mufassirūn, he is quick to assert that the angels’ questions neither arise out of envy on their part nor because of protest against the divine intention. The angels are only acting by the will of God when they ask things they are allowed to ask or of which they have already received divine foreknowledge. Qatāda is reported to have said that the angels knew from God about the new creature and its

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409 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 463.
410 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 466.
ability to create chaos on earth. Their questioning is simply the desire to acquire more wisdom.\textsuperscript{413} According to Ibn ʿAbbās, during the creation of Adam the angels thought that God would not bring into existence a being more valuable and more knowledgeable than they are. They became anxious like all of creation which was called to obey this new being. Ibn Kathīr cites the following verse in this context: “Then He turned to the sky, which was smoke – He said to it and the earth, ‘Come into being willingly or not,’ and they said, ‘We come willingly’” (Q 41:11). So the angels praised God with glory and holiness.\textsuperscript{414}

Interestingly, we don’t hear the divine voice confirming the angels’ complaint. Nor do we see an attempt to discard their objection. Instead the qur’anic response is that God knows what they do not know. God’s knowledge is superior to angelic knowledge. This answer gives humanity hope that, in God’s vast knowledge, in the end human beings have the potential to do good. One finds a confident future perspective on human civilization. Clearly, humanity’s “benefit” or value prevails over its negative, destructive or burdening aspects. Humankind’s creation seems to point to a more hopeful and positive future. The emphasis lies on the constructive aspects of humanity without denying the reality of the possible inclination towards evil. Human civilization will be able to progress rationally and intellectually. This aspect of scientific progress and human intellectual development will come more to the forefront in the exegetical literature when examining the section on “Teaching the names.”

According to Ibn Kathīr, the dialogue also points out that the angels seem to desire to be placed on earth instead of the human being, since they glorify and praise God in the best way

\textsuperscript{413} Ibn Kathīr, \textit{Tafsīr al-Qurān}, Vol.1, 216-217.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibn Kathīr, \textit{Tafsīr al-Qurān}, Vol.1, 220.
possible. The statement “I know what you do not know” shows, according to Ibn Kathīr, that God knows better that human beings are suitable for the earth and angels more fitting to remain in the heavenly realm.\textsuperscript{415}

Zamakhsharī also sees in God’s statement “I know what you do not know” a clear indication that God knows the benefits (\textit{mašālih}) of assigning Adam and his descendants as vicegerents on earth – a matter which is hidden from the angels. Then he raises this question followed by his own answer, “Then if you said, ‘Has He not made plain to them those benefits?’ I answer, ‘It is enough for the servants (\textit{al-ʾibād}) to know that all of God’s works are good and wise, even if the content of that goodness and wisdom is hidden for them.’”\textsuperscript{416}

In Rāzī’s commentary we find an interesting reflection on humanity’s destructive potential to which the angels pointed. He believes that human beings face greater challenges when trying to perform good deeds. They have to struggle with egotistic desires and other inner negative aspects of their being. It is because of all these inner struggles they need to overcome that they are superior to the rest of the creation including the angels. Angels, instead, do not have to face these difficulties and do not have the free will to chose disobedience over servanthood to God. Humanity however is endowed with free will which also makes disobedience an option. Those who reject the call of Satan and do not follow their whims and caprice are more valuable in the sight of God than angels.\textsuperscript{417}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{415} Ibn Kathīr, \textit{Tafsīr al-Qur’ān}, Vol.1, 217.
\item \textsuperscript{416} Al-Zamakhsharī, \textit{Al-Kashshāf}, Vol.1, 252. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 286.
\item \textsuperscript{417} Al-Rāzī, \textit{Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr}, Vol.2, 186. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 297.
\end{itemize}
Bayḍāwī also agrees with previously noted exegetes that God’s announcement is to teach the angels the art of consultation (al-mushāwara). Further, he regards God’s choice of the human being as the demonstration of His favor overriding the negative impact foreseen in their questioning. God’s response to the angels reveals that wisdom necessitates the bringing to life of that which is by and large good, because to forgo a greater good for a lesser evil would be a great evil in itself.

Maybudī likewise does not dismiss the danger of creating the human being. He is fully aware that humanity has strong destructive potential and makes this explicit in his comments. However, for him as for others the beauty and greatness of the human person outweighs all these harms. He says,

You who circumambulate Our Throne, ask forgiveness for the not-yet-committed sins of Adam’s progeny, who have not yet come into existence! Ask for safety in their going forth, and say, ‘Peace be upon them, peace be upon them,’ so that when they come into existence, their feet will not slacken on the carpet of servanthood. You who are in charge of the veils, weep for the folk of heedlessness among Adam’s progeny so that We may conceal their disobedience with Our forgiveness because of your weeping! […] We have commanded all this so that you angels may come to know the eminence of these dust-dwellers and make no protest at Our decree.

Said Nursi follows many of his predecessors. First, like Bayḍāwī and others he interprets the dialogue between the angels and God as a teaching moment: God is demonstrating “consultation (mūșavere) as a method.” Further, the angels, according to Nursi and as pointed

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418 Al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, Vol.1, 68. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 298.
419 Al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, Vol.1, 68. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 298-299.
420 Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Aṣrār, 47.
421 Nursi, İşārāt ʿil-ʿIʿcāz, 343.
out earlier by the interconnectedness of the heavens and earth, have many relations and connections with the dwellers on earth. Otherwise they would not be so invested in the placement of humankind on earth. This is in line with many Qur’anic statements in which some angels are described as acting as guardian angels, some of them as recording angels and some will question human beings in their graves – the so-called munkar and nakir angels.

Following a similar vein to the previous authors, Nursi upholds the overall goodness of the creation of human beings. In his commentary the reader encounters an imaginary listener asking following question, “How can man be worthy when he perpetrates so much evil and corruption? Does wisdom necessitate his existence, to worship and hallow the Most High?” And Nursi answers that “on account of the mystery of the trust (emanet) being deposited in him, his evils and iniquities are forgiven.”422 God has no need for human worship since angels are constantly in praise and glorification of Him. He concludes that humanity’s creation therefore is for some purpose known only to the One All-Knowing of the Unseen.423

The divine response including inna (indeed) of innī a’lamū mā lā ta’lamūna (“Indeed, I know what you do not know”) again rebuts doubts and hesitation. As Nursi says, “it [the inna] is used only in speculative matters not incontestable ones, whereas the Most-High self-evidently and indisputably knows what creatures do not know.”424 As far as I understand Nursi’s statement, since the creation of humanity is encountered with doubt and reservation, the use of the inna refutes any speculation. Nursi agrees with Bayḍāwī in saying that in humanity’s creation

422 Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 342-343.
423 Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 344.
424 Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 350.
there is much good and many advantages, and there is sinfulfulness, but this is minor. To his mind, it would be opposed to wisdom to abandon the former due to the latter. Humanity also holds a mystery, and this qualifies humans for vicegerency. The angels did not know about this aspect, but humankind’s Creator had knowledge of it. There is also an instance of wisdom in the creation of human beings that renders them superior to the angels; the angels did not know this, but the One who created it did. According to Nursi, God already had created beings like the angels which are pure good and beings which are pure evil – the devils. Another category of being – neither good nor evil – are the animals. God’s wisdom desired the existence of a fourth sort of being embracing both good and evil.

How is the human being prone to destruction and evil? In answering this question, Nursi’s anthropological thinking provides an answer. As he states, if the human powers (kuvve) of anger and animal appetites – kuvve-i gadabiye and kuvve-i şeheviye as Nursi terms them – submit to the power of intellect (kuvve-i aklîye), through effort and striving, human beings can rise higher than the angels. But if the reverse is the case, humanity can fall lower than the beasts, for they have no excuse not to act in accordance with goodness. Having been entrusted with

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425 Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 350.
426 Nursi, İşârât ül-I’caz, 351. Nursi does not regard the creation of evil as evil. He approaches the issue from a theocentric perspective stating that God who is al-jamîl (the Beautiful One) and al-hâkîm (the All Wise) does not create anything which is ugly or has no beautiful results full of wisdom. In the second point of his 18th Word in the Risale-i Nur collection, he distinguishes between hüsn-ü bizzat (the beauty of beings and events which are immediately recognized in themselves like the beauty of a flower) and hüsnü bilgâr (the beauty which is not apparent outwardly but hidden in the beautiful outcomes and results). It is the acquisition (kesb) of evil which he considers as evil. Evil events willed by humans are “created” by God’s will and since creation is merely good, an apparent evil still allows for many hidden beautiful results not immediately apparent to many. For more on his thoughts on evil see Tubanur Yeşilhârk, “Theodicy and the Problem of Evil in Islam: The Risale-i Nur as Case Study,” (PhD diss., Durham University UK, 2013).
427 Nursi, İşârât-ü l I’caz, 351.
the powers of anger and animal appetites, human beings can therefore fall into destructive habits resulting in corruption and chaos on earth. For *jinn* and human beings are the only beings to whom these powers are given without limit and it is only through divine guidance that they can come to know how to channel and direct these without going into excess.\(^{428}\)

What does Nursi mean by these three faculties of anger (*gadap*), animal appetite (*şehvet*) and intellect (*akıl*)? Nursi’s exposition of humanity’s “powers” appears in numerous passages of the *Risale*, but the most comprehensive treatment can be found in his commentary on *Surat al-Fāṭiḥa* in his *İşârât-ül İ’caz* (Signs of Miraculousness). There he offers a detailed interpretation of the *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* (the straight path). To summarize it briefly, God created first the spirit (*ruh*) and housed it in the human body which in itself is a changing and needy entity. In order to ensure the body’s continued existence, it was equipped with the three human powers, namely the power of animal appetites (*kuvve-şehviye-ı behimiye*) to attract benefits. Second, the power of savage passion (*kuvve-şebuiye-ı gadabiye*) to repulse harmful and destructive things. Third, the power of angelic intellect (*kuvve-ı akliye-ı melekiye*) to distinguish between benefit and harm. According to Nursi, compared to other creatures human beings can make greater use of these powers in order to progress and flourish through the mystery of competition. For Nursi, competition among human beings on the path of goodness brings out the intellectual, emotional and physical potential they have been created with. These capacities can only be displayed through outer challenges and hardships in life. Other beings, however, possess innate limitations of these powers – not humans.

\(^{428}\) Nursi, *İşârât-ül İ’caz*, 348.
It is only through divine guidance that humanity can come to know how to use these three powers in a right and constructive way. It is through the sharīʿa that those limitations are revealed to humankind. Divine regulations expressed through the sharīʿa thus prohibit excess (ifrāt) and deficiency (tefrit) and enjoin the middle way (vasat) or al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm. In support of his statement, Nursi refers here to Q 11:112, “So keep to the right course as you have been commanded (fastaqim kamā umirta), together with those who have turned to God with you. Do not overstep the limits, for He sees everything you do.”

Nursi describes three end results for all these three powers: One possibility is that each power is channeled in a way which leads to deficiency (noksan), which is negligence (tefrit); The second degree is the one of superabundance, which is excess (ifrāt); and the third or middle way is the one of justice (adalet). In order to illustrate that, he provides several examples. Hence, the passive attitude of not utilizing one’s intellect leads to its deficiency which is stupidity and foolishness (gabāvet). Its excessive opposite would be the over-indulgence in trivial matters and issues that should not concern the person.429 The ideal or middle way, according to Nursi, is wisdom (hikmet) as stated in Q 2:269 which he provides as explanation, “And He gives wisdom to whoever He will. Whoever is given wisdom has truly been given much good, but only those with insight bear this in mind.”

A second example offered by Nursi showcases the wrong and right use of the power of animal appetite (kuvve-i şeheviye-i behimiye). He says that the deficiency in the power of animal appetites is apathy (humud) or apathy in the want of appetite (adem ʿül-ıstiyak). Its opposite

429 Nursi, İşârât-ı l’ caz, 45-47.
excessive use is profligacy (fücur), which is to wish whatever is encountered whether lawful or unlawful. Its middle way is uprightness (iffet), which is to aim for what is licit and shunning what is illicit.\textsuperscript{430}

A third example states that the deficiency in the power of savage passion is cowardice (cebanet). By that, Nursi means fearing what is not to be feared and delusive imagining. Its excess is uncontrolled anger (tehevvür), which is the progenitor of despotism (istibdad), domination, and tyranny (zulüm). Its balanced way of al-şirāt al-mustaqīm is courage (şecaaat), which is giving freely of oneself with love and eagerness for the defence of the laws of Islam and the upholding of the Word of divine unity.

Nursi’s exposition of the three powers of humans can be taken as an allusion to the qur’anic depiction of ambivalent human nature. In this context Q 95:4-6 reads, “We created the human being in the finest state (fī ahsani taqwīm). Then reduced him to the lowest of the low (asfala sāfilīna) but those who believe and do good deeds will have an unfailing reward.” In fact, Nursi dedicates an entire treatise to Q 95 – The Twenty-Third Word – in describing these two aspects of human nature. Human beings are ambivalent creatures and are given the free choice to decide how to direct their inner capacities and “powers” – they can either follow the sharīʿa pointing them towards the correct application of these faculties or they can let themselves be guided by their whims and caprice and end up on a self-destructive path, as Q 5:49 indicates: “So judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow their whims (ahwā),

\textsuperscript{430}Nursi, İṣārāt-iül ʾı’caz, 46.
and take good care that they do not tempt you away from any of what God has sent down to you.”

In terms of humanity’s destructive potential, the Qur’an calls on people to a responsible treatment of the creation. That the world maintains a delicate balance is well-known. It is up to human beings not to cause any disharmony in the universe and show a respect towards God’s orderly system. Recurring qur’anic verses warn human beings not to create chaos in the world. Numerous passages stress the negative aspects of human nature. Often humanity can be in total denial of all the blessings and fall into ingratitude.\(^{431}\) At the same time humans do not respect the boundaries and limitations set up by divine order.\(^{432}\) Humankind is elevated by God but also can fall to the lowest of the low. Thus we detect in Nursi and other previous commentators the qur’anic idea that human beings along with the *jinn* are given the dual capacity of good and evil. Despite their capacity to commit evil they are also suited by nature to take up the heavy task of being a vicegerent of God and to do good.

For now, it is important to keep in mind that, despite these destructive aspects, God decides nonetheless in favor of human beings and sees the goodness of humanity weighing greater than their negative side. The fundamental value and worth of humanity continues to be upheld throughout the creation narrative. In line with this divine response, the interpretive

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\(^{431}\) See for example Q 80:17, “Let man perish! How ungrateful he is,” Q 42:48, “We have not sent you [Prophet] to be their guardian: your only duty is to deliver the message. When We gave man a taste of Our mercy, he rejoices in it, but if some harm befalls him on account of what he has done with his own hands, then he is ungrateful,” Q 43:15, “Yet they assign some of His own servants to Him as offspring! Man is clearly ungrateful,” or Q 100:6, “Man is ungrateful to his Lord.”

\(^{432}\) See for instance Q 96:6, “But man exceeds all bounds.”
community affirms the “burden” and negative aspects of humans while at the same time acknowledging the larger human “benefit” and value.

### 4.3 The Act of Creation

Indeed, We created (khalaqnākum) you [plural]. We gave you [plural] shape (ṣawwarnākum), and then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they did. But not Iblīs: he was not one of those who bowed down. God said, ‘What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded you?’ and he said, ‘I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay (ṭīn).’ (Q 7:11-12)

Indeed, We created (khalaqnā) the human being (al-insān) out of dried clay (ṣalsālin) formed from dark mud (ḥamaʾin masnūn). The jinn We created before, from the fire of scorching wind. Your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will create (innī khāliqun) a mortal (bashar) out of dried clay (ṣalsālin), formed from dark mud (ḥamaʾ in masnūn). When I have fashioned him (sawwaytuḥu) and breathed (nafakhtu) from My Spirit (min rūḥī) into him, bow down before him,’ and the angels all did so. But not Iblīs: he refused to bow down like the others. God said, ‘Iblīs, why did you not bow down like the others?’ and he answered, ‘I will not bow down to a mortal (bashar) You created from dried clay (ṣalsālin), formed from dark mud (ḥamaʾ in masnūn). (Q 15:26-31).

Your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will create (innī khāliqun) a human being (basharan) from clay (ṭīn). When I have shaped him (sawwaytuḥu) and breathed (nafakhtu) from My Spirit (min rūḥī) into him, bow down before him.’ The angels all bowed down together, but not Iblīs, who was too proud (istakbara). He became a rebel. God said, ‘Iblīs, what prevents you from bowing down to what I have made with My own hands (bi-yadayya)? Are you too arrogant (astakbarta)?’ Iblīs said, ‘I am better than him: You made me from fire, and him from clay (ṭīn).’ (Q 38:71-76)

When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they all bowed down, but not Iblīs. He retorted, ‘Why should I bow down to someone You have created out of clay (ṭīn)?’ (Q 17:61)

When moving to the process of human creation – the next sequence of events – several elements for a theology of migration can be identified. First, the theme of divine intimacy stressing the fundamental dignity of human life continues to be a recurring feature highlighted by
God’s close and personal involvement with the creation of the human being. Second, as will be explained, the accounts transcend humanly constructed boundaries and borders and testify to the deep interconnectedness of the human family and creation. They affirm the unity of humankind while still maintaining its diversity. Likewise, the individuality of human beings is as important as the collective human community. Third, the relational character and social dimension of human beings is underlined. Humanity is therefore first and foremost related to the divine by its response “Yes, we have testified” (qālū balā shahidnā, Q 7:172) to the divine question “Am I not your Lord?” (alastu bi-rabbikum, Q 7:172) as the primordial covenant maintains. But there is more than the relation of humanity to the divine. The social aspect and need is sustained primarily through familial relationships and the community at large. This relational element has important ramifications for debates on family re-unification often present in migration issues.

Lastly, the importance of the human body and the physical dimension of human existence is implied in these passages and throughout the Qur’an. This last point is significant for addressing the tragic exploitation of human bodies within the massive flow of labor migration. Laborers are often perceived as no-bodies, as Gemma Tulud Cruz rightly observes.\(^\text{433}\) In the Qur’an, there is no idealization of the soul or spirit (rūḥ) over the body or material dimension of human beings (bashar) who was created out of seemingly inferior elements – clay or ṭīn which is basically earth mixed with water. As such, a soul/body dualism is not supported by a holistic reading of the Qur’anic content.\(^\text{434}\) Concerning the rūḥ, the Qur’an states in Q 17:85: “[Prophet],

\(^{433}\) Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 142.

\(^{434}\) This is not to say that dualistic conceptions of the body/soul have never been formulated in Islamic theology. In fact the nature of the soul and its relation to the body was a hotly debated topic like in Christian theology, and it
they ask you about the Spirit. Say, ‘The Spirit is part of my Lord’s domain. You have only been given a little knowledge.’” Thus, Muslim scholars generally considered any discussion on the spirit off-limits and so there is very little information one can find on this issue.

Coming back to the body, Cruz highlights that the human body is dignified and therefore needs to be taken into consideration must when developing theologies of migration. Her point is well taken, considering that many bodies continue to be exploited and abused by capitalist interests. The body is the closest experience for human beings and hence must be the focus any integrated theology of migration. Such an approach will help to counter the “violence of un-rest.” In a world which treats bodies by mere profit-driven interest, many manual workers cry out for often denied physical rest. It is in this light that an Islamic theology of migration cannot overlook the significance of the body and has to bring it into the conversation. To emphasize the human body does not mean to create a dualistic view by which the spirit is neglected. The wholeness of the person is only maintained by nurturing and preserving the spirit as well as the body in the same way.

4.3.1 Divine Immediacy

As in the prior treatments, the thread of God-given dignity of human life continues within these verses as well. The Qur’an upholds the value, honor and worth bestowed on humans by stressing time and again that God is personally involved with the creation of the human being.

resulted in various opinions. Muslim theologians discussed, for instance, whether the soul was pre-eternal or not. For an overview see Christian Kanzian and Muhammad Legenhausen (eds.), Soul: A Comparative Approach (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2010).

Cruz, An Intercultural Theology of Migration, 144.
As such, divine intimacy with humankind is likewise stressed in these instances through following means. To begin with, the verses employ again the first personal pronoun “I” (‘innī) to emphasize God’s close and direct relationship with humanity. While the use of the second person plural – the majestic or royal “We” as in “We created you” (khalaqākum) – is equally employed, it does not take away from the divine monopoly of creating the human person. The Qur’an maintains that human beings stand alone in front of God and can directly communicate with Him by offering their concerns and supplications without any intermediary.

As Q 15:26 points out, human beings were created after the jinn and the angels. This alludes to the high status of humanity presented here as the peak of the creation even after angels are already existent. Furthermore, the Qur’an mentions frequently that God shared something of Himself with the human species – His divine spirit (rūḥ). Other aspects also reiterate the deep relationship of God with His creation. The fact that God created the human being with “His own two hands” (bi-yadayy as in Q 38:75) and “shapes him” as Q 7:11 (sawwarnākum), Q 15:29 (sawwaytuhu), and Q 38:72 (sawwaytuhu) highlight, emphasizes the theme of divine immediacy.

Q 38:75 is the only instance in the seven narratives where God’s hands are specifically mentioned. This human being is shaped by God, crafted by God. Baydāwī comments on Q 7:12 that the “two hands” refer to God’s direct and explicit creation of the human being without allowing any other intermediaries.\(^{436}\) This underlines once more the theme of divine immediacy.

As Bodman notes, this Qur’anic description stresses the great honor given to humankind.\textsuperscript{437} Through shaping the human being by His own hands, God expresses His affection and love towards humanity. Hands are generally understood to be the tools to create great artistry and craft. As such they symbolize power, will, ability and creativity.

In several Qur’anic passages God’s hand or hands are mentioned.\textsuperscript{438} Early on Muslims found themselves in a theological dispute over the anthropomorphic references in the Qur’an and how to ascribe them to God in a meaningful way. The so-called mushabbihūn took these passages very literally.\textsuperscript{439} Suffice it to say that the earliest commentaries on Q 38:75 are generally concerned to stress incomparability (tanzīh): God’s “two hands” are nothing like human hands.

For later commentators like Ibn ʿArabī and his followers of the esoteric interpretation (taʾwil) of the Qur’an, the two hands point to the polar relationship in God Himself. That Adam was created by God’s two hands indicates the fact that God employed this polarity also in the creation of the first human being – the microcosm. The microcosm created in the image of God, must have “two hands” in the same qualitative sense that God has them, not only physically. The macrocosm being the microcosm’s mirror image equally has to have them.\textsuperscript{440} Therefore the two

\textsuperscript{437} Bodman, The Poetics of Iblīs, 179.
\textsuperscript{438} See for example Q 3:73, “Tell them, ‘All grace is in God’s hands (yad illāh): He grants it to whoever He will – He is all embracing, all knowing.’” Q 23:88, “Say, ‘Who holds control of everything in His hand (bi-yadīhi)? Who protects, while there is no protection against Him, if you know [so much]?’” or Q 48:10, “Those who pledge loyalty to you [Prophet] are actually pledging loyalty to God Himself – God’s hand (yad ullāhi) is placed on theirs – and anyone who breaks his pledge does so to his own detriment: God will give a great reward to the one who fulfills his pledge to Him.”
\textsuperscript{440} For more on the “two hands of God” and God’s “fingers and feet” as it appears in Islamic theology see Murata, The Tao of Islam, 81-85.
hands of God refer to the two basic types of divine attributes which are involved in the creation of humanity – namely the attributes of tanzīḥ and tashbīḥ or the names of wrath and majesty and names of mercy and kindness as examined earlier.\textsuperscript{441} Humanity is created in the form of most of the divine qualities since some divine attributes only belong to God. For instance, \textit{al-ṣamad}, \textit{al-qadīm} or \textit{al-bāqī}. Humankind’s value and superiority, but also great responsibility, are well maintained.

Much in the Qur’an and in the \textit{ḥadīth} literature make mention of the right and the left hand. In that regard, the Qur’an also talks about the “companions of the right” and the companions of the left.” These verses refer also to the dual capacity of human beings who again can rise to the highest of the high or degrade themselves to the lowest of the low as Q 56:27-43 explains:

Those on the Right (\textit{aṣḥāb al-yamīn}), what people they are! They dwell amid thornless lote trees and clustered acacia with spreading shade, constantly flowing water, abundant fruits, unfailing, unforbidden, with incomparable companions We have specially created – virginal, loving, of matching age – for those on the Right, many from the past and many from the later generations. But those on the Left (\textit{aṣḥāb al-shimāl}), what people they are! They will dwell amid scorching wind and scalding water in the shadow of black smoke, neither cool nor refreshing. Before, they overindulged in luxury and persisted in great sin, always saying, ‘What? When we are dead and have become dust and bones shall we then raised up? And our earliest forefathers too?’\textsuperscript{442}

\textsuperscript{441} Murata and Chittick, \textit{The Vision of Islam}, 159.
\textsuperscript{442} See also Q 69:19-37, “Anyone who is given his Record in his right hand (\textit{bi-yamīnihī}) will say, ‘Here is my Record, read it. I knew I would meet my Reckoning,’ and so he will have a pleasant life in a lofty Garden, with clustered fruit in his reach. It will be said, ‘Eat and drink to your heart’s content as a reward for what you have done in days gone by.’ But anyone who is given his Record in his left hand (\textit{bi-shimālīhī}) will say, ‘If only I had never been given any Record and knew nothing of my Reckoning. How I wish death had been the end of me. My wealth has been no use to me, and my power has vanished.’ ‘Take him, put a collar on him, lead him to burn in the blazing Fire, and [bind him] in a chain seventy metres long: he would not believe in Almighty God, he never encouraged feeding the destitute, so today he has no real friend here, and the only food he has is the filth that only sinners eat,’” or Q 17:71, “On the Day when We summon each community, along with its leader, those who are given their
The “companions of the left” allowed themselves to be dominated by the names of tanzīh — majesty and wrath — and therefore end up living in distance from God and ultimately reside in hell. The “companions of the right” instead conformed to the divine names of tashbīh seeking nearness and closeness to God. Their ultimate fate is therefore the abode in paradise.

In a tradition attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās we read that the “companions of the right” were taken out of the right side of Adam when God extracted his seed from his loins, while the “companions of the left” were taken out from Adam’s left side, “God created Adam and struck him with His right hand. His seed came out on the right hand white like silver and on the left hand black like coals. God said, ‘These are for the Garden, and it is no concern of Mine. These are for the Fire, and it is no concern of Mine.’” Further, Ibn ‘Abbās reiterates the Qur’anic statement that Adam was created by God’s hand. In Ibn Kathīr’s tafsīr we find an addition to the report saying that God created Adam with His hands so that Iblīs could not claim haughtiness or arrogance.

The well-known Sufī and theologian Abū al-Qāsim Qushyarī (d. 465/1072) writes that the verse on the “two hands” indicates that “what God deposited in Adam is not found with

record in their right hand (bī-yamīnihi) will read it [with pleasure]. But no one will be wronged in the least: those who were blind in this life will be blind in the Hereafter, and even further off the path.”

444 The ḥadīth is found in Tirmidhī, Imam Mālik’s Al-Muwatta and Abū Dawūd as cited in Murata, The Tao of Islam, 83.
445 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi’ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 466. This is also confirmed by a report of Muḥammad ibn Išāq mentioned also in Tabarī, Jāmi’ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 468.
anyone else, so [God’s] special favor (khuṣūṣiyya) becomes manifest with him.”⁴⁴⁷ Maybudī suggests that the meaning is that God singled Adam out for creation with two hands to honor (karāma) him among all creatures.⁴⁴⁸ The Tafsīr al-Jalalayn equally emphasizes the honor bestowed upon Adam by the use of “My own hands,” as stated in the following, “He said, ‘O Iblīs! What prevents you from prostrating before that which I have created with My own hands? In other words, whose creation I [Myself] have undertaken. This [in itself] is an honour for Adam, as God has [Himself] undertaken the [unmediated] creation of all creatures.”⁴⁴⁹

Be it as it may, what is of significance for the purpose of this study, is the emphasis on God’s creative and close involvement with the human being, highlighting the immediate relationship and dynamism by mentioning God’s “two hands.” The fundamental dignity and sacredness of human life continues to be stressed throughout the creation narrative. Humankind is even more honored than the rest of the creation since it is only them who are created by God’s “two hands.” The rest of creation, as Maybudī reminds us, comes into being through the divine decree of “Be!” This implies that all attributes and qualities of God are employed in the creation of humanity marking them as the microcosm of the world in which all the signs of God are displayed in a limited manner.

Moreover, God’s closeness is not only present to the collectivity of humankind but also to every individual as noted in the earlier discussion of the distinction of rabbuka (singular: your Lord) and rabbukum (plural: your Lord) frequently occurring in the Qur’an. In that regard, it is

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⁴⁴⁷ Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, 47.
interesting to note the shifts from the plural to the singular form as seen in Q 7:11-12 “We created you (khalaqnākum)” and “We gave you shape (sawwarnākum)” to Q 15:26 “Indeed, We created (khalaqnā) the human being (al-insān) out of dried clay (salṣālin) formed from dark mud (ḥamaʿ in masnūn)” and Q 38:71, “Your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will create (innī khāliqun) a human being (basharan) from clay (fīn).’” God has an immediate connection with each individual but also with humankind as a whole.

What is also obvious in these descriptions is that human creation is elaborated to distinguish a succession of stages as expressed through the use of “shaped” and “formed” evident for example in Q 40:64, “It is God who has given you the earth for a dwelling place and the heavens for a canopy. He shaped you (ṣawwarakum), formed you well (fa aḥsana ṣuwarakum), and provided you with good things. Such is God your Lord, so glory be to Him, the Lord of the worlds,” or as Q 3:6 reads, “It is He who shapes you all (yuṣawwirukum) in the womb as He pleases. There is no god but Him, the Mighty, the Wise.”

One notices in the previous verse the addition of “beauty” (husn) when describing human creation. As such, God dignifies the human

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450 See also Q 18:37, “His companion retorted, ‘Have you no faith in Him who created you from dust (turāb), from a small drop of fluid (nuffa), then shaped you (sawwāka) into a man?’” Q 22:5, “People, [remember] if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust (turāb), then a drop of fluid (nuffa), then a clinging form (ʿalaqa), then a lump of flesh (mudgha), both shaped (mukhallaqa) and unshaped (ghayr mukhallaqa): We mean to make [Our power] clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants and then you grow and reach maturity. Some die young and some are left to live on to such an age that they all forget all they once knew. You sometimes see the earth lifeless, yet when We send down water it stirs and swells and produces every kind of joyous growth,” Q 39:6, “He created you all from a single being (nafs wāḥida), from which He made its mate; He gave you four kinds of livestock in pairs; He creates you in your mothers’ wombs, in one stage after another (khalq min baʿ di khalq), in threefold depths of darkness. Such is God, your Lord; He holds control, there is no god but Him. How can you turn away?” Q 40:67, “It is He who created you from dust (turāb), then from a drop of fluid (nuffa), then from a tiny, clinging form (ʿalaqa), then He brought you forth as infants, then He allowed you to reach maturity, then He let you grow old – though some of you die sooner – and reach your appointed term so that you may reflect,” Q 82:7-8, “Who created you, shaped you (fa sawwāka), proportioned you (faʿ adalaka), in whatever form (ṣūrā) He choose ?”
being even more by telling that he was created in the most beautiful manner (*ahsani taqwīm*).

Another Qur’anic verse is even more explicit about these stages and supports the notion of progression, change and motion inherent to human nature,

> We created the human being from an essence of clay (*sulāla min ṭīn*), then We placed him as a drop of fluid (*nutfa*) in a safe place, then We made that drop (*nutfa*) into a clinging form (*ʿalaqa*), and We made that form (*ʿalaqa*) into a lump of flesh (*mudgha*), and We made that lump (*mudgha*) into bones (*ʿizāma*), and We clothed those bones (*ʿizāma*) with flesh (*laḥma*), and later We made him into other forms – glory be to God, the best of creators! (Q 23:12-14).

A succession of stages on the other hand brings us back to the notion of graduality and motion discussed in the earlier section. Human beings are even in their physical condition not static beings but constantly marked by a progression. “Migration” as understood as an internal and physical aspect of human beings is therefore key to human nature.

When we examine in detail the various elements combined in the creation of the first human being a couple of important points come to the surface. As Bodman highlights, throughout their history Muslims have reflected to a significant degree on the meaning of the clay and divine breath. For them, these two elements also referred to the close and distant relationship of human beings to God. Clearly, such descriptions point to the two complementary aspects of God – the *jamālī* and the *jalālī* aspects of the divine names which we have discussed earlier. In turning to the first element employed for the creation of the human being – clay (*ṭīn, ṣalṣāl, ḥamaʾ in masnūn*) – following observations can be made.

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4.3.2 The Clay

God shapes and forms this human being with the material of clay which is mentioned in the Qur’an in different ways. As Neal Robinson notes, there are twelve occurrences in the Qur’anic text mentioning clay (ṭīn), four to “resounding” clay (ṣalsāl), three to petrified clay (sijjīl), and one to baked clay or earthenware (fakhkhār).\(^{452}\) Robinson counts eight references in the Qur’an which describe the creation of humankind from some kind of clay.\(^{453}\) While many of the verses treat the creation of the first human being, Q 6:2 addresses specifically the people during Muhammad’s time, “He is the one who created you (khalaqakum) from clay and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time, known only to Him; yet still you doubt!”\(^{454}\) In Q 3:59 it is earth or dust (turāb), in Q 7:12 clay (ṭīn), and sticky clay or mud (ṭīn lāzib). As apparent in the creation verses, it is more specifically described as “clay from fetid foul mud or dark mud” (ṣalsāl min hama’in masnūn) and “clay like earthenware” meaning baked or dry clay (ṣalsāl ka-l-fakhkhār). The exegetes regard these words as referring to the different stages of a single material.\(^{455}\) The commentators spend significant energy in describing the clay, but interestingly do not discuss the implications of the use of it. Neither Ṭabarī nor Ibn Kathīr, for instance, offers further reflection on the significance of the clay. The present study is however interested in the possible ramifications of the clay for a theology of migration.

\(^{453}\) See in addition to the verses already mentioned others like Q 6:2, “He is the one who created you from clay (ṭīn) and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time, known only to Him; yet still you doubt!” Q 32:7, “Who gave everything its perfect form. He first created the human being (al-insān) from clay (ṭīn),” Q 37:11, “So, ask the disbelievers: is it harder to create them than other beings We have created? We created them from sticky clay (ṭīn lāzib),” Q 55:14, “He created humankind out of dried clay (ṣalsāl), like pottery (fakhkhār).” See Robinson, “Clay,” 340.
Ṭabarî mentions several reports providing us details on the nature and origin of the clay. According to one very well known tradition by Ibn ʿAbbās and others, God ordered the angels to bring some clay from the earth. Interestingly, the earth refuses several times out of fear for being disfigured until the angel of death finally fulfills the divine order by bringing clay to God. The narration states, “The Lord of all might sent the angel of death, and he took some of the surface (adīm) of the earth, part sweet [soil] and part brackish. And He created Adam from it. For that reason he was called Adam, because he was created from the surface (adīm) of the earth.” In the same vein, Ibn Ishāq says that Adam was created from the skin (adama) of the earth. The Tafsīr al-Jalalayn also mentions with regard to Q 2:30 that Adam was created from the surface of the earth (adīm al-ard). Is the refusal of the earth an indication to the destructive potential of human beings towards the environment? Or could this also be taken as a reference to the general tendency of humankind to neglect the heavenly realm by being distracted through focusing on its earthly existence alone? It is difficult to come to any final observation here. From a holistic point of view, the Qur’an however confirms that humanity has the capacity to disrupt the natural order of the cosmos and can fall prey to solely focus on its earthly existence. Moreover, the encounter between heaven and earth and the element of possible upward mobility of clay is noteworthy here. Seemingly inferior material like clay is taken up to heaven, the interconnectedness – even with the earth refusing it at first – is once again affirmed as we have alluded to this before.

457 Al-Ṭabarî, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol.1, 480.
Ibn ʿAbbās goes on to say that God mixed the clay which was from the surface of the earth and taken from all of its corners. Red, white and black earth explain therefore the diversity of colors in human creation. Another report by Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī quotes the Prophet Muhammad as follows, “The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: ‘God created Adam from a handful which He had taken from all over the earth. The children of Adam came according to the earth: among them came the red-coloured, the black, the white, and what is in between; the smooth and the rough; the wicked and the good.’” In the same vein, we read in Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī’s commentary *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt* (Subtleties of the Allusions), “He [God] commanded clay to be extracted from every patch of ground,” affirming the expansive nature of humans and their wide connection with the earth as a whole. Maybūdī echoes the same thought, “In other words, he [Adam] was extracted from every region—sweet and briny, soft and hard. In Adam’s clay were salty and sweet, coarse and soft, so the natures of his children became diverse. Among them are both sweet-tempered and bad-tempered, open and closed, generous and stingy, easy-going and difficult, black and white.” An interesting verse in the Qur’an makes a direct connection between the diversity of the earth’s fruits and the diversity of humankind, “Have you not seen how God sends water down from the sky and that We produce with it fruits of varied colours; that there are in the mountains layers of white and red of various hues, and jet black; that there are various colours among human beings, wild animals, and livestock too?” (Qur’an 35:28).

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Ibn ‘Arabī also offers another noteworthy observation on the clay mentioned in Q 15:26. He maintains that the dried clay (ṣalṣāl) and the dark mud (ḥamaʾin masnūn) indicate also that the four elements of the universe – earth, water, air, and fire – are involved in the creation of the human being. The dark mud (ḥamaʾin masnūn) is the outcome of earth mixed with water and then becomes ready to be formed. To have the dried clay (ṣalṣāl) at the end air and fire are key.464 Al-Kāshānī agrees with Ibn ‘Arabī and follows a similar line of interpretation.465 Maybudī offers a similar view when discussing Q 15:26 and commenting on a report by Ibn ‘Umar who said, “He [God] created Adam from five things: clay, water, fire, light, and wind.” Maybudī then adds,

The wisdom in this is that the Exalted Lord created every one of His creatures from one kind. He created the angels from light and He created the jinn from fire […] God created the birds from wind, He created the beasts and the crawling things of the earth from dust, and He created the creatures of the sea from water. He created each from one kind, but He created Adam from all of these kinds so as to honor him and make him eminent. Thus he would be superior to all the creatures of the world. All are subjected to him, and he is given ruling power over all. This is why the Lord of the Worlds said, ‘We indeed honored the children of Adam, and We carried them on land and sea, and We provided them with goodly things, and We made them much more excellent than many of those We created’ [Q 17:70].466

On that note, Murata and Chittick add the following. One of the meaning of the human body created out of clay is that the body is made out of food. Food is basically water and earth that reaches the human being through the intermediary of plants and animals. Hence, the body is

466 Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Aṣrār, 433.
For food to be produced all four universal elements – earth, water, air and heat – need to be included. In that sense, humankind has a widespread connection with the creation. Taken altogether, since these elements are universal, the human being has a cosmic relationship with the universe.

Such views on the universal elements involved in the creation of Adam increasingly led to the understanding that the human being became the microcosm (al-ʿālam al-asghar) corresponding to the macrocosm (al-ʿālam al-kabīr). On that note of the micro – and macrocosmic relationship, Ṭabarī reports that according to Ibn ʿAbbās the valleys are a simile for people’s hearts (qulūb), the scum which passes away is a simile for doubt (shakk), and that which is of use to humankind and remains in the earth is a simile for certainty (yaqīn). Based on this tradition Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal offers the following interpretation,

This clearly establishes a parallel between the earth or the world and human beings (and the worlds within them) and between the sky and heaven. It also establishes – via the symbol of water – a parallel between the life of the body and that of the heart and the soul. It thus implies micro-macrocosmic mirror-play and analogical levels of meaning in the Qur’an in general. In other words, it implies that the akhbār – or at least the similitudes or amthāl within the akhbār of the Qur’an can be understood in an “inner” sense in addition and parallel to their literal outward meanings.

The same idea is echoed in the tafsīr of Maybuṭī,

As for how the body takes into account the terrestrial world, it is that the body is just like the earth, the bones are like the mountains, marrow is like the minerals,

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467 Murata and Chittick, The Vision of Islam, 92.
the belly like the ocean, the viscera and veins are like rivers, flesh is like the dust, hair is like plants, the front is like the inhabited parts, the back like the uninhabited parts, before the front is like the east, behind the back is like the west, the right is like the south, the left is like the north, breath is like wind, speech like thunder, sounds like thunderbolts, laughter like light, sorrow and grief like darkness, weeping like rain, the days of childhood like the days of spring, the days of youth like the days of summer, the days of maturity like the days of autumn, and the days of old age like the days of winter. In sum, you should know that there is no animal or plant, nothing silent or speaking, whose characteristic you will not find in this dust-dwelling speck. This is why the great ones of the religion have said that you will find everything in the Adamite, but you will not find the Adamite in anything.⁴⁷¹

In combination with the notion of khalīfa this seems to be a valid observation. Adam and humanity being vicegerents of God on earth can only engage with the affairs of the creation if they are able to relate to them in a certain way. In this sense the creational element of clay establishes a connection with the cosmos.

In that regard, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 671/1273) has stated the following in his famous Seven Advices, “In modesty and humility – be like the soil.”⁴⁷² People should embrace the attitude of their creational substance, the earth. The earth or soil is marked by a state of humility, productivity and creativity. It is constantly enduring the burden of humans but never refusing to produce goodness in terms of sustenance and provision. Yet, despite its significant role, the soil is perfectly content to be below the feet of humans. This provides direction on how to discipline the lower ego (al-nafs al-ammāra bi al-sū’ – the evil-inciting self). Whenever people think that they have achieved something, looking at the soil should raise following

⁴⁷¹ Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, 522.
question, “Have I done more than the soil does? So what permits me to be at any level higher than the soil?” Such an introspective reflection on the Qur’anic meaning of clay as a creational substance and its connection to the soil can perhaps prevent arrogant, haughty or exclusionary attitudes. The soil does not set up any exclusionary boundaries and embraces everyone by providing sustenance to anyone.

In his interpretation of the clay and mud mentioned in Q 15:26, Muhammad Asad notes that not only was Adam created from clay but the Qur’an speaks of all humanity as being created in a similar fashion. Both these terms (ṣalṣāl) and (ḥama’ in masnūn) signify humanity’s lowly biological origins as well as the fact that the body is composed of various organic and inorganic substances existing in other combinations or in their elementary forms on or in the earth. Such an assessment signifies once more the interconnected relationship of humanity with the earth and does not allow for human beings to be reduced to a limited geo-spatial reality. Asad adds another interesting perspective to the meaning of ṣalṣāl mentioned three times in chapter 15 as well as in Q 55:14. His views are obviously based on authorities like Baydāwī who state frequently that ṣalṣāl refers to the dried clay which emits sound.473 Asad adds the following to this viewpoint,

474 Asad, The Message of the Qurān (Dar Al-Andalus: Gibraltar, 1980), 520.
This can be also taken as an allusion to the dual aspect of human nature. While human beings can rise to the highest rank due to their intellectual and spiritual capacity, they are at the same time extremely weak, vulnerable and prone to error.

Whether one believes in the scientific aspect of the Qur’anic account of the clay being the creational substance or not or approaches it in a literal or metaphorical way is not the concern here. Examples within the commentary tradition testify that both traditional literalist approaches and those with modernist leanings employing a metaphorical approach were applied to Qur’anic interpretation.

What is of significance for our purpose is the affirmation of the unity of humankind being created from the same elementary substance as the Qur’an time and again reiterates. Adam the progenitor of humanity stands for all and unites everyone. Such a depiction of the human being runs counter to narcissistic or arrogant claims of superiority in forms of extreme nationalism or racism. If the first human being was created from the various elements of the earth he inherently maintains a deep relationship with all of it, and is a being as vast as the universe. As these interpretations indicate, human beings are portrayed as having an intimate relationship with the earth in its entirety. In this light, Q 53:32 uses the same term for the stuff of which humans have been created as it uses for the earth as place, “He has been fully aware of you from the time He produced you from the earth (al-ard) and from your hiding places in your mothers’ wombs, so do not assert your own goodness: He knows best who is mindful of Him.” Q 20:55 reiterates the same notion, “From the earth We created you (minhā khalaqnākum – the minhā grammatically
refers to al-ard – the earth mentioned in the previous verse), into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time.

This is why the creational substance of clay also calls into question constructed borders and boundaries. First and foremost, it demonstrates the connection between heaven and earth and secondly the interrelated aspect of humanity. It shows that humankind in its wide and expansive nature transcends those artificial territorial lines. The particularity and individuality of every human being is preserved by the description of the origin of the clay while the unity and collective spirit of the human family is equally stressed.

4.3.3 The Spirit - Ṣūḥ

As the qur’anic passages above show, the primordial human being (insān or bashar) is first shaped out of clay and then brought to life as the creator breathes something of His own spirit into the shaped form. The audience hears the first person singular speaking as seen in Q 15:29 or 38:72: “When I have fashioned him (sawwaytuhu) and breathed (nafakhtu) My Spirit (rūḥī) into him, bow down before him.” In Q 32:9 the same phrasing is employed except that now the third person appears: “Then He moulded him; He breathed from His spirit into him” (sawwāhū wa-nafakha fīhi min rūḥīhi). After God has breathed His spirit into the material form, the creature comes to life and actualizes itself. God shapes, kneads, molds, forms (sawwā) Adam into a form becoming receptive of the spirit. The same depiction appears in the passages describing the conception of Jesus. Speaking about Mary, in one passage, the Qur’an states in Q 21:91, “We breathed into her from Our spirit” (nafakhnā fīhā min rūḥinā). The passage in Q 66:12 is identical, except that the “into her” has been changed to “into it” (fīhi), “We breathed
into it from Our spirit.” As Michael Sells explains, some commentators interpret the “into it” as a reference to the breathing of the spirit directly into Mary’s vagina.475

The spirit (rūḥ) is the life-giving force or a supernatural being like an angel and is mentioned in the Qur’an in twenty-one instances. In pre-Islamic poetry the Arabic word rūḥ refers to a blowing or breathing.476 In the creation narratives, it comes down as the breath of life into Adam. As the verses explain, the spirit is something from God (“from My Spirit” - min rūḥī). In another instance of Q 58:22 we read, “These are the people in whose hearts God has inscribed faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him (birūḥīn minhu).” Clearly, the meaning of rūḥ in the Qur’an has been a topic of discussion since Muhammad’s time, as the Qur’an itself notes in Q 17:85, “They ask you about the Spirit (rūḥ). Say, ‘The Spirit (rūḥ) is part of my Lord’s domain. You have only been given a little knowledge.’”

What is out of question is the great honor and value bestowed on human beings by carrying something “God-like” from their original heavenly home. It comes therefore as no surprise, that many Muslim scholars have suggested that human beings may thus have a portion of divinity itself or, at the very least, a very special relationship with God. From the content of the verses under consideration, it is indisputable that human beings have something “divine” in them. This is a very powerful expression in that it reiterates once more the theme of fundamental human dignity given by God. God shares something from Him with humanity. To honor God is to honor the human being.

Moreover, the rūḥ is the link between the heavenly and the earthly realm. In a mobile way it moves between the two areas of the invisible and the earth. Q 39:42 refers in this regard to the moment of sleep when the spirit moves around, “God takes souls (anfūsa) at the time of death and the souls of the living while they sleep. He keeps hold of those whose death He has ordained and sends others back until their appointed time: there truly are signs in this for those who reflect.” While this verse in question uses the term nafs (soul) in the plural (anfūsa) interpreters take it to mean that it still indicates the spirit (rūḥ). Lane mentions that,

Some of the lexicologists assert the nafs and the rūḥ to be one and the same, except that the former is feminine and the latter (generally and often) masculine. Others say, that the latter is that whereby is life; and the former, that whereby is intellect, or reason, so that when one sleeps, God takes away his nafs, but not his rūḥ which is not taken save at death. 477

One cannot but agree with Lane when he concludes his analysis by saying that there must be a difference between them, since they are not always interchangeable and the Qur’an uses these two terms nafs and rūḥ in different ways. As he rightly points out, the difference between them depends upon the considerations of relation. Lane cites a tradition which makes this difference even clearer,

God created Adam, and put into him a nafs and a rūḥ; and that from the latter was his quality of abstaining from unlawful and indecorous things, and his understanding, and his clemency, or forbearance, and his liberality, and his fidelity; and from the former, (which is called al-nafs al-ammāra) his appetence, and his unsteadiness, and his hastiness of disposition, and his anger. 478

477 Lane also translates nafs as “soul, spirit, the vital principle” Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I, 2827.
478 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I, 2827.
The Qur’an also distinguishes between the different degrees of the nafs such as al-nafs al-lawwāma (self-reproaching/blaming nafs) or al-nafs al-muṭma `inna (the nafs at peace) as read in Q 89:27-30, “[But] you soul at peace: return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing; go in among My servants; and into my Garden.’ These terms have especially become significant in the Sufi tradition in relation to the seven degrees of the nafs (marātib al-nafs) as highlighted in the discipline of tazkiya al-nafs (purification of the soul).  

Be it as it may, a couple of preliminary observations can be already made here: the spirit is not a material or spatial entity. It is not from the worldly realm and it is breathed from God into the human being. It has the ability to wander and leave the human body and return back. It is mobile in that it can be taken back to God and returned back to the bodies who are asleep. It transcends the earthly order and connects to the extraterrestrial dimension. It is noteworthy, that the Qur’an also employs the same term rūḥ for angelic beings as in the case of Gabriel in Q 16:102 which many classic commentators took as referring to the archangel, “Say that the Holy Spirit (rūḥ al-qudus) has brought the Revelation with the Truth step by step from your Lord, to strengthen the believers and as guidance and good news to the devout.” In addition, as we have seen in these narratives, unseen beings like Iblīs and the angels are not disinterested in the human being. The contrary, they are very much involved and engaged with this new creation.

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480 See also Q 78:38, “On the Day when the Spirit (al-rūḥ) and the angels stand in rows, they will not speak except for those to whom the Lord of Mercy gives permission, and who will say only what is right,” and Q 26:193, “The Trustworthy Spirit (al-rūḥ al-amīn) brought it down.”
Perhaps this is too far-fetched but the fact that the term rūḥ is both used for angels and human beings could also indicate the special relationship humankind has with the extraterrestrial order and existence. Humankind as a microcosm therefore contains an angelic element (rūḥ), an animalistic dimension (nafs) and through its body’s needs is also connected to minerals, plants and other substances of the universe. In a wider sense, the human being has emotions and feelings, a memory and an intellect – invisible and immaterial aspects of one’s life but existential. With regard to that, the rūḥ in particular and humanity in general cannot be solely reduced to an earthly or material existence. These invisible and non-physical aspects of human existence are much wider than any limited location and again refer to a “cosmic identity” inherently connected to the whole of the universe.

In its literal sense the word rūḥ means “a wind, blowing or breath.” It is also noteworthy that the Qur’an employs the word rūḥ in relation to the creation and not simply when referring to angelic or human beings as seen in Q 35:9, “It is God who sends forth the winds (al-riyāḥ); they raise up the clouds; We drive them to a dead land and with them revive the earth after its death: such will be the Resurrection.” As the spirit revives the body, it equally revives the creation. In this sense, the rūḥ is an expansive entity: it is connected to God, to celestial beings but also to the large earthly realm and can spread out everywhere. I see here again the vast capacity of the rūḥ being able to relate to all these realms: God, heavens and earth.

Ultimately, the rūḥ has to return to God – its original place of departure. This is the only logical conclusion. As such, it cannot remain on earth forever and as the Qur’an time and again reminds its audience, all human spirits will be taken back to God. In this respect, it is interesting
to note following in Q 34:12, “And We subjected the wind (al-rūḥ) for Solomon. Its outward journey took a month, and its return journey (rawāḥuha) likewise.” The return journey is connected to the same word rūḥ and likewise Q 56:88 states, “If that dying person is one of those who will be brought near to God he will have rest (rawḥun), ease (rayḥān), and a Garden of Bliss.” Rest, ease and the garden of bliss are all connected to the realm of immortality to which the rūḥ will eventually return. Already the words indicate a close connection to the eternal realm. At the same time, the spirit in its migrant character points to the fact that human beings are migrant in their nature. Migrant identity is therefore key to the human DNA and to be heedless of this fact is to deny one’s original nature. The rūḥ is an element inherent to human beings which cannot be reduced to an earthly existence. It is of spiritual nature and cannot be fed or categorized by the material of the physical world.

Furthermore, the spirit is a unifying element connecting humanity to one another since every human being is created with a spirit. This is also supported by the Qur’anic view of the primordial covenant (mithāq). Such an understanding questions artificial boundaries and borders. In sum, the spirit once more demonstrates the expansive nature of human beings embracing the heavens and the earth in their entirety. The spirit is not a material or physical entity and as such cannot be placed or reduced to a geo-spatial locality or territory. This is also echoed in the exegetical tradition.

In Yazır’s commentary on Q 38:72 we read that the rūḥ is not a material entity and it is only after the divine spirit being breathed into Adam that he gains intellectual and physical
power.\textsuperscript{481} In this sense, God gave a share of His power to Adam. Similarly, al-Kāshānī states when discussing Q 17:85 that the spirit does not belong to the visible creational realm of this world. “Rather, It [the Spirit] belongs to the world of the command, that is, [the world] of origination, which is the world of essences that are disengaged from primordial matter and of substances that are sanctified from \textit{shape}, colour, direction and whereness \textsuperscript{482} (emphasis mine).

And again, we find the same understanding of the \textit{rūḥ} being limitless in Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī’s (d. 283/896) \textit{Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-ʿAzīm} – the earliest extant Sufi commentary. While Tustarī explains the \textit{nafs} to be the darker, earthbound side of the human being, the \textit{rūḥ} is the opposite of that as explained in his comments on Q 110:2, “The lower self (\textit{nafs}) desires the world because it comes from that, but the spirit (\textit{rūḥ}) desires the Hereafter because it comes from that. Gain ascendancy over the lower self and open for it the door to the Hereafter by glorifying [God] (\textit{tasbīḥ}) and seeking forgiveness for your nation.”\textsuperscript{483} Ibn ʿArabī being influenced by much of Tustarī’s thought reiterates almost the exact same ideas about the spirit.\textsuperscript{484} Clearly, the \textit{rūḥ} in its essence is migratory and will ascend back to the heavens – its original departure point.

\textbf{4.3.4 The Physical Being – \textit{Al-Bashar}}

Reading through the verses under consideration, the listener encounters two phrases used for describing the human being – one is \textit{al-insān} and the other \textit{al-bashar}. Both terms mean “human being” and may refer to male or female – hence genderless as read for instance in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{481} Yazır, \textit{Hak Dini Kur’an Dili}, Vol.6, 4109-4110.
\item \textsuperscript{482} Al-Kāshānī, \textit{Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī}, Vol.3, 214.
\item \textsuperscript{484} Al-ʿArabī, \textit{Tafsīr}, Vol.1, 730.
\end{itemize}
case of *al-bashar* in Q 30:20, “One of His signs is that He created you from dust (*turāb*) and – lo and behold! – you became human (*basharun*) and scattered far and wide.” The two words include in their meanings important nuances. While the former – *al-insān* – denotes humanity in its social aspect or rather describing the relational character of the human person, the latter – *al-bashar* – emphasizes the physical dimension of an individual. We turn first to a discussion of the physical aspect or material form of the human being termed as *al-bashar* and the importance of the body as it is portrayed in the Qur’an. This assessment will help us to include a theology of the body into the overall construction of a theology of migration. The degradation and desacralization of the human body as it occurs in the exploitation of labor workers is undeniable. As such, these abuses cannot be dismissed when talking about the realities of contemporary migration. It is in this light, that the fundamental dignity of the human being can only be preserved by safeguarding the human body.

According to Lane, the root *b-sh-r* has to do with the complexion of the skin. In citing the “Annotations on the Qamūs” of Muḥammad al-Fāsī, *bashar* is explained as the human skin devoid of hair and wool.485 Further, it refers to the “external skin; the cuticle or scarf-skin, the exterior of the skin of the human being.” It also signifies “the face and body of the human being.”486 Interestingly, *bashara al-ard* refers also to “the herbage appearing upon the surface of the earth.” Similarly, *mā aḥsana basharatāhā* means “How goodly is its herbage appearing upon its surface.” To my mind, the linguistic connection through the phrase *bashar* denoting the human being and the reference here to the earth once again reiterates the special relationship of

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humankind with the earth in its wide capacity. The *Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage* mentions “skin” or “skin-to-skin” as one meaning of *bashar* as seen in Q 74:29, “it scorches the skin (*lawwāḥatun l’il-bashar*).” The term *bashar* occurs 36 times in the Qur’an.\(^{487}\)

Opinion has varied regarding the spirit’s nature and its relationship to the body but in general, Muslims have believed that spirits are joined to a body at birth, taken from the body at death and reunited with the body on the day of resurrection. In this respect, there are both regarded as equally important. The Qur’an stresses the importance of the *rūḥ* which animates the body as stated also in the *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn* when commenting on Q 17:85 by saying, “And they will question you, that is, the Jews, concerning the Spirit, from which the body receives life.”\(^{488}\) This is also stressed in a report attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās mentioned in Taβarī’s *tafsīr*, “When God breathed into him [Adam] His spirit, breath came from the front of his head, and everything which came to flow from it within his body became flesh and blood. And when the breathing had reached his navel, he looked at his body and marvelled how beautiful was what he saw.”\(^{489}\) This is also an indication that the physical creation of the human being is an extraordinary divine act and something to fall in awe about.

The Qur’an furthermore singles out various parts and organs of the body by discussing their significance for deepening one’s faith and spiritual progress. Many passages highlight the fact that the body with all its functions is a God-given blessing and as such cannot be claimed to be owned by human beings. It rather belongs to the overall notion of the trust (*al-amāna*)

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\(^{487}\) In *Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*.
explained earlier. Q 90:8-9 is a case in point, “Did We not give him two eyes, a tongue (lisān) and two lips (shafatayn)?” Similarly, Q 16:78 shows that all bodily functions are God-given, “It is God who brought you out of your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing (al-samʿa) and sight (al-abṣāra) and minds (al-afʿida), so that you might be thankful.”

Other verses equally stress the same notion that the physical creation is a special divine blessing bestowed on humankind. Q 32:9 is one example illustrating that, “Then He moulded him; He breathed from His Spirit into him; He gave you hearing, sight, and minds. How seldom you are grateful!” Other verses like Q 23:12-14 also point to the fact that God Himself has created the human body with its flesh to protect the bones,

We created the human being (al-insān) from an essence of clay, then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place, then We made that drop into a clinging form, and We made that form into a lump of flesh, and We made that lump into bones, and we clothed those bones with flesh (laḥm), and later We made him into other forms – glory be to God, the best of creators.

The divine origin and creation of the human body is repeatedly affirmed by the Qur’an in stressing the fact that from the very beginning of creation until the final shape of human life, God is the sole creator. Every step from the existence of the sperm to full physical maturity is made only possible by God. A number of verses call humankind to reflect upon their own creation so that they reach spiritual enlightenment and acknowledge their creator. In order to reach spiritual enlightenment and nourish the soul – the inner dimension of human beings – reflection on the body is key.

The Qur’an stresses that wasting blood either by sacrificing an animal or one’s self is intolerable and does not lead to a close relationship with the divine as Q 22:37 maintains, “It is
neither their meat (luḥūm) nor their blood (dimāʾ) that reaches God but your piety.” Blood is therefore a treasurable element and should not be sacrificed out of carelessness. Taken altogether, the body is a loan given by God and therefore needs to be treated according to the wishes of its true Owner (al-mālik al-mulk). Human beings portrayed as the peak of the creation and endowed with a high intelligence are incapable of creating bodies. The Qur’an therefore makes explicitly clear that such a reflection should lead to the declaration of faith and with that to the expression of gratitude (shukr) through proper worship of the creator.

Proper worship of the creator entails the proper use of the body and all of its functions according to divine guidance. References on that can be found throughout the qur’anic text. Sometimes it is the functional element of the human body which is put into the foreground but many verses dealing with bodily parts have the goal to encourage the pursuit of an ethical and pious life. That bodily parts and organs have been created for a specific ethical and moral purpose becomes clear in the many passages alerting humans to make wise use of their faculties. God in His wisdom and being the Wise (al-hakīm) did not create anything in vain and human beings are to respect that divine will by using their body with care and balance. It is in this light that qur’anic passages like the following need to be understood, “Believers, avoid making too many assumptions – some assumptions are sinful – and do not spy on one another or speak ill of people behind their backs: would any of you like to eat the flesh (lahm) of your dead brother?” (Q 49:12). Here, the Qur’an admonishes the incorrect use of the faculty of the mouth or speech. It characterizes activities such as gossiping, spreading rumors and second guessing one another as eating the flesh of an individual.
Another verse reads, “Hatred has already shown itself from their mouths (afwāh)” (Q 3:118). The Qur’an depicts the unbelievers with the characteristic of their dishonesty in speech, when it states, “We could even point them out to you if We wished, and then you could identify them by their marks, but you will know them anyway by the tone of their speech (laḥn al-qawāl). God knows everything you do” (Q 47:30). In contrast, the believers are instructed to control their voice and reduce their speech in an appropriate way. For instance, Q 31:19 reads, “Go at a moderate pace and lower your voice (ṣawt), for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of asses” and Q 49:2-3 says, “Believers do not raise your voices (ašwāt) above the Prophet’s, do not raise your voice when speaking to him as you do to one another, or your deeds may be cancelled out without you knowing.”

References to the eye and eyesight express not only physical vision but also spiritual enlightenment as read for instance in Q 5:83, “And when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes (a’yunahum) overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth. They say, Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.” On other occasions, the Qur’an maintains that eyes are created both to see and understand, as in Q 16:78 noted earlier, “And gave you hearing and sight (absār) and minds, so that you might be thankful.”

Qamar ul-Huda points out that, “many qur’anic passages forge a particular connection between the function of hearing and the reception of revelation. The verb ‘to hear’ (sami’ā) corresponds to the active process of learning from what was heard.”

“Have these people not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people’s eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts.” God’s closeness and nearness to His creation are once more stressed by underlining the functions of eyes and ears, “He [God] said, ‘Do not be afraid, I am with you both, hearing (asma’u) and seeing (arā) everything” (Q 20:46).

The mouth, the eyes, the ears, the heart – in short, all body parts can be either used for cultivating faith and deepening one’s relationship with God or degrading oneself by abusing these precious God-given organs. Every human being will be therefore held accountable for the use or misuse of God’s amāna – the body. As several verses indicate, the body will have an eschatological significance in that it will testify against or for the human being, “On the day when their own tongues (alsina), their hands, and their feet will testify against them about what they have done” (Q 24:24). In a similar vein Q 36:65 asserts, “Today We seal up their mouths, but their hands speak to Us, and their feet bear witness to everything they have done.” In his commentary on Q 17:14 which says, “Read your record. Today your own soul is enough to calculate your account,” Maybudī brings in Q 24:24 stating that the bodily member from which a sin went forth will testify against the person.491

Similarly, in his interpretation of Q 9:111 which reads, “God has purchased the persons and possessions of the believers in return for the Garden,” Said Nursi asserts the following. All external and internal faculties of the body like emotions, feelings and desires need to be treated according to divine guidance with wisdom, care and balance. He says further that such use of

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491 Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, 455.
every limb in the name of God will increase the value of it thousandfold. In contrast, the use of the bodily parts for one’s own selfish desires and gains degrades the holy meaning of that limb. One example he gives to illustrate such a devaluation of the body is the tongue and sense of taste,

Yet another example is that of the tongue and the sense of taste. If you do not sell it to your Wise Creator, but employ it instead on behalf of the soul (nafs) and for the sake of the stomach, it sinks and declines to the level of a gatekeeper at the stable of the stomach, a watchman at its factory. But if you sell it to the Generous Provider, the sense of taste contained in the tongue will rise to the rank of a skilled overseer of the treasuries of Divine compassion, a grateful inspector in the kitchens of God’s eternal power. ⁴⁹²

So while every individual employs the use of the tongue and the sense of taste in their daily activities of speech and eating, it is the intention (niyya) to decide whether one wants to use the bodily limb according to the divine purpose and wisdom or not. The decision to use every body part in God’s name elevates people in their spiritual rank and preserves the sanctity of the outer and inner bodily functions. Anyone who refuses however to treat the body in God’s name or betrays the trust has to suffer the penalty. By using the most precious tools on the most worthless objects, says Nursi, the individual will have to face the ultimate consequence of punishment. The limbs have every moral and ethical right to ask for accountability of such abuse. ⁴⁹³ In addition to the Qur’anic material, similarly the hadith literature supports the sacrality and proper use of the body. The hadith corpus and along with it the legal tradition (fiqh) is full of guidance regarding the wise use of the body: how to eat, sleep, pray, move, walk, smile, work, purify oneself,

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⁴⁹² Nursi, Sözler, 55.
⁴⁹³ Nursi, Sözler, 56.
preparation of the body for funerals etc. – Following example is only one out of many as our discussion focuses mainly on the Qur’anic treatment,

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, ‘A servant of God will remain standing on the Day of Judgment until he is questioned about his (time on earth) and how he used it; about his knowledge and how he utilized it; about his wealth and from where he acquired it and in what (activities) he spent it; and about his body and how he used it.’

The importance of the body is furthermore underlined through the many eschatological references in the Qur’an. The Qur’anic arguments in support of the resurrection of the body, and not only the return of spiritual souls (maʾād) represent a new creation on the part of the all-powerful God as seen in Q 17:49, “They also say, ‘What? When we are turned to bones and dust, shall we really be raised up in a new act of creation?’ Or as read in Q 18:48, “They will be lined up before your Lord: ‘Now you have come to Us as We first created you, although you claimed We had not made any such appointment for you.’ The body is included into the sacred realm of paradise and the enjoyment in the hereafter also comprises all sorts of physical pleasure. Believers will be rewarded with a number of sensual pleasures as Q 47:15 puts it,

494 Al-Tirmidhi, hadith 148 as cited in http://www.islamawareness.net/Knowledge/knowledge_article0001.html.
495 See also Q 21:104, “On that Day, We shall roll up the skies as a writer rolls up [his] scrolls, We shall reproduce creation just as We produced it the first time: this is Our binding promise. We shall certainly do all these things,” Q 27:64, “Who is it that originates creation and reproduces it? Who is it that gives you provision from the heavens and earth? Is it another god beside God?’ Say, ‘Show me your evidence then, if what you say is true,’” Q 29:19, “Do they not see that God brings life into being and reproduces it? Truly this is easy for God,” Q 30:27, “He is the One who originates creation and will do it again – this is even easier for Him. He is above all comparison in the heavens and earth; He is the Almighty, the One who Governs,” Q 53:47, “That He will undertake the second Creation,” Q 75:40, “Does He who can do this not have the power to bring the dead back to life,” Q 86:5-8, “The human being should reflect on what he was created from. He is created from spurting fluid, then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone; God is certainly able to bring him back to life.”

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Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious: rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh, rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink, rivers of honey clarified and pure, [all] flow in it; there they will find fruit of every kind; and they will find forgiveness from their Lord. How can this be compared to the fate of those stuck in the Fire, given boiling water to drink that tears their bowels?

Highly criticized in non-Islamic circles was the fact that Qur’anic depictions of heavenly rewards also included women granted to the faithful and that sensual pleasures are also a part of the celestial life, “They will have pure spouses (azwājun muṭahhara) and there they will stay” (Q 2:25). Moreover, other rewards that await one in heaven are young boys serving wine as Q 52:24 states, “Devoted youths (ghilmān) like hidden pearls wait on them.” Such Qur’anic statements were a perfect occasion for those who already held negative views about Islam to confirm their opinion that the Muslim faith is a promiscuous religion. The Qur’an however regards food, drink and the human desire for sexual pleasures as natural enjoyments in life and does not neglect these human aspects.

From the previous assessment subsequent conclusions can be made. The sacrality of the body is well established by the Qur’an. That one of the most important rituals in the Islamic tradition – the prayer (al-salāt) – also includes the full incorporation of the prayer along with its purification is quite telling, “You who believe, when you are about to pray, wash your faces and your hands and arms up to the elbows, wipe your heads, wash your feet up to the ankles and, if required, wash your whole body” (Q 5:6). If the body needs to be purified through ablution from visible and spiritual filth, this also entails that anything harming the body needs to be removed as well. If the human body is
exploited to such a degree that it cannot perform its basic functions of worship for which it was essentially created, then proper measures need to be taken.

Similarly, the pillar of fasting and pilgrimage also calls for the involvement of the body. External and internal bodily functions need to be properly used and preserved so that the faith and spirituality of the believer can be deepened and cultivated. Since the body and the spirit are intimately connected, and the spirit is equally nourished by a balanced use of the body, the physical dimension of the human being cannot be neglected. The exploitation of the body or its misuse cannot be tolerated since it bears negative consequences for the inner well-being of the human person.

Further, if the Qur’an categorically rejects that anyone else other than God can claim ownership of the body, then this calls for a responsible and ethical treatment of the body not only by the person himself but also by other fellow human beings. To avoid harm of human life including the body has therefore become also a goal of the *sharīʿa* (*maqāsid al-sharīʿa*). In light of the notion of the trust this becomes inevitable. As Birgit Krawietz points out, “the numerous prohibitions and rules set out by Islamic jurisprudence define the inviolability (*ḥurma*) and integrity of the human body—even if these ideas are not formulated as claims and entitlements granted to the individual.”496 With respect to that, Islamic tradition also calls for a respectful treatment of the body during funeral preparations like washing or burying the dead person. The prohibition of

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cremation and the fact that the dead body cannot be removed from its grave after a certain period are all related to the dignity Islam has assigned to the human body. The mutilation of the body is also strictly forbidden.\textsuperscript{497} If bodily integrity needs to be preserved and honored even at the occurrence of death, then the sacrality of the human person during lifetime seems out of question.

Muslim scholars have mostly maintained that committing suicide is considered a major sin for which there will be punishment in the hereafter. Martyrdom seems to be excluded from such a scenario. As Krawietz notes, “likewise, with the exception of the shīʿī practice of self-flagellation in commemoration of ʿĀshūrā, the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram, and some beautification procedures, the majority of Muslim scholars strongly condemn aggression against the self and defilement of the integrity of the body.”\textsuperscript{498}

\textbf{4.3.5 The Social Being – Al-Insān}

The other term denoting the human being and frequently appearing in the Qur’an and the creation narratives under consideration is the word \textit{al-insān}. The root ‘-\textit{n-s}, according to Lane refers to someone who “was, or became, sociable, companionable, conversable, inclined to company or converse, friendly, amicable, or familiar, with him, or by means of him, and to him.”\textsuperscript{499} An \textit{ins} is therefore a sociable and enjoyable companion, a friend. Hence \textit{al-insān} refers

\textsuperscript{497} Krawietz, “Body, in Law.”
\textsuperscript{498} Krawietz, “Body, in Law.”
\textsuperscript{499} Lane, \textit{Arabic-English Lexicon}, Book I, 113.
to humanity in the social and relational aspect. The word *insān* appears in the Qur’an 65 times.\(^{500}\) Interestingly, the same phrase can be used for the human being in the singular and humankind in its collectivity as seen in these instances, “God wishes to lighten your burden; humankind (*a*l-*insān*) was created weak” (Q 4:28). Or, “We created the human being (*al-insān*) – We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein” (Q 50:16). Once again, the term affirms the particularity of every person while also emphasizing the importance of the collective nature of humanity. Can we perhaps already infer that human individuality is intrinsically nurtured by human collectivity and vice versa? It is certainly undeniable that human beings have a need for social relationships. Chapter 67 of the Qur’an is named *sura al-insān* because of the references in verses 1-3 to the creation of humankind.

That human beings are social and relational beings is first and foremost affirmed by the fact that they relate to God by their very nature. God created the human being who then responds and relates to God through the primordial covenant. As Q 7:172 reminds us, humanity is asked by God “Am I not your Lord (*alastu birabbikum*)?” and humankind replies “Yes, we bear witness (*balā shahidnā*).” In this statement we find a double implication. First, humanity connects to God in its relational nature and then collectively to one another as the “we” indicates.

This relational character of human beings is likewise reiterated in the creation narratives. God creates Adam and his wife who is not named in the Qur’an. The Qur’an also does not offer any information on when his wife was created,

People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul (*nafsun wāḥida*), and from it created its mate (*zawjahā*), and from the pair of them spread

\(^{500}\) *الإنسانَ*, “-n–s,” in *Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage.*
countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship (arḥām) [literally: the ‘womb-relationships, i.e. all those to whom you are related] God is always watching over you (Q 4:1).

It is interesting that the above verse already includes a divine warning not to “severe the ties of kinship.” Honoring God is to honor familial relationships as well. Further indication of the social nature of human beings is given in the creation narratives under investigation. Q 2:35 addresses Adam and his wife together but indirectly the entire human race is equally implied in these verses,

We said, ‘Adam, live with your wife in this garden. Both of you eat [dual form: kulā] freely there as you will, but do not go near [dual form: lā taqrabā] this tree, or you will both become [dual form: fa-takūnā] wrongdoers.’ But Satan made them slip, and removed them from the state they were in. We said, ‘Get out [third person plural: ihbiṭū], all of you! You are each other’s enemy. On earth you will have a place to stay and livelihood for a time.’

According to Ṭabarī, opinions differ whether the third person plural ihbiṭū (get out) in the verse above referred to Adam, his wife and Iblīs only or whether all humankind and Satan’s offspring were meant. The version in Q 20:123 instead employs the dual form, “God said, ‘Get out of the garden (qāla uhbiṭā minhā jamīʿā).’” The collective jamīʿā (altogether) stands in tension with the dual case uhbiṭā. It is however still safe to say that humanity in its collectivity is equally implied. In the other creation accounts we have also seen that not only Adam but also all humankind was addressed. Q 7:11-12, already mentioned above, is a case in point,

Indeed, We created (khalaqnākum) you [plural], We gave you [plural] shape (ṣawwarnākum), and then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and

they did. But not Iblīs: he was not one of those who bowed down. God said, ‘What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded you?’ and he said, ‘I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay (fīn).’

In staying with the creation of Adam’s wife, Ţabarî notes based on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that Eve was created so that Adam can find repose (sakan) in her. Their relationship is described as intimate and close which is stressed through the mentioning of Eve being created out of Adam’s rib,

Adam was put to dwell in the Garden. He went around alone with no wife in whom he could find repose. Then he fell asleep and woke up to find a woman sitting beside his head whom God had created from his rib. So he asked her: ‘Who are you?’ And she said: ‘A woman.’ He said: ‘Why were you created?’ She said: ‘So that you could find repose in me.’

While this particular formulation of Eve being created out of Adam’s rib has led some to interpret women’s status as being inferior and resulted in other misogynistic views, the statement itself does not reveal such a negative notion. For our purpose, the attention here is on the aspect of intimacy, closeness, complementarity and relationality. Contrary to the negative understanding, the account stresses that Adam who experiences loneliness even in the garden is in need of Eve – a proper companion. From the very beginning human relationships are affirmed as existential for human well being. This is further expressed in a report attributed to Ibn Iṣḥāq which says in the latter part,

When his slumber was lifted from him, and he stirred from his sleep, he saw her beside him, and he said – according to what they claim, and God knows best –: ‘My flesh, my blood, and my wife.’ And he found repose in her. When God had duplicated him, and made a means of repose for him from himself, He spoke to

him face to face: ‘Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in the Garden and eat thereof easefully where you desire; but do not draw near this tree, lest you become evil-doers’ (emphasis mine).  

Interestingly, here Eve is described as a duplication of Adam who is a repose for him from himself. Eve is described as being so close to Adam that she is an essential part of his being.

Q 7:189 sounds very similar like Q 4:1 above and reiterates the notion of intimacy and finding comfort in one’s spouse. After mentioning the creation of Eve the verse also states,

It is He who created you all from one soul (nafsin wāhida), and from it made its mate so that he might find comfort in her: when one lies with his wife and she conceives a light burden, going about freely, then grows heavy, they both pray to God, their Lord, ‘If You give us a good child we shall certainly be grateful,’ and yet when He gives them a good child they ascribe some of what He has granted them to others (Q 7:189).

For Maybudī it is clear that husband and wife are closely linked to each other. He comments on Q 7:189 as follows, “When He created the creatures, He created them as pairs linked to each other. He made male and female together, He bound similar to similar and genus to genus.”

Muhammad Asad offers a more egalitarian reading of Q 7:189 when he states,

My rendering of nafs, in this context, as ‘living entity’ follows the same reasoning [like Muhammad ’Abduh who rendered it as ‘humankind’ which emphasizes for him the common origin and brotherhood of humanity] As regards the expression zawjahā (‘its mate’), it is to be noted that, with reference to animate beings, the term zawj (‘a pair, one of a pair’ or a mate’) applies to the male as well as to the female component of a pair or couple; hence, with reference to human beings, it signifies a woman’s mate (husband) as well as a man’s mate (wife). Abū Muslim – as quoted by Rāzī – interprets the phrase ‘He created out of it (minhā) its mate’ as meaning ‘He created its mate (i.e., its sexual counterpart) out of its own kind (min jinsihā)’, thus supporting the view of Muhammad ’Abduh referred to above. The literal translation of minhā as ‘out of it’ clearly alludes, in conformity with

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503 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, Vol. 1, 514.
504 Al-Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, 348.
the text, to the biological fact that both sexes have originated from ‘one living entity.’  

Turning to the larger context of the Qur’an and other verses, we observe that the relational character of human beings cannot be diminished and needs to be nurtured and cultivated. The Qur’an employs a number of terms focusing on the social dimension of humankind such as āl (family/household/people) when it refers to the family of Lot (Q 15:59), the people of Pharaoh (Q 3:11 and Q 8:54), or āl Ibrāhīm (Q 4:54) when it addresses the family of Abraham.  

While there is no one word that matches exactly the English term “kinship,” the Qur’an contains a series of words that can refer to different relationships: qurbā (near relative), arḥām (close kin, maternal kin), ʿashīra (clan, tribe), zawj (husband); zawja (wife), imraʿa (wife, woman), ṣāḥiba (wife, companion, friend); akh (brother, friend), ḥamīm (solicitous relative, close friend), ṣihr (affine, relation through marriage), nasab (lineage, kindred, attribution) and several others.  

Another term appearing within the qur’anic discourse is the term ahl. According to Giladi, ahl has a number of meanings. In many verses throughout the Qur’an, it refers to the

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505 See Muhammad Asad’s interpretation of Q 7:189 in Asad, The Message of the Qurʾān (Dar Al-Andalus: Gibraltar, 1980), n.p.
506 Q 15:59, “But We shall save the family of Lot (āl Lūṭ),” Q 3:11, “Just as Pharaoh’s people (āl firʿawn) and their predecessors denied Our revelations, and God punished them for their sind: God is severe in punishing,” Q 8:54, “They are indeed like Pharaoh’s people (āl firʿawn) and those before them, who denied the signs of their Lord: We destroyed them for their sins, and We drowned Pharaoh’s people (āl firʿawn) – they were all evildoers,”
people of a house or dwelling.\textsuperscript{509} In others, more explicitly to a family.\textsuperscript{510} Often times the meanings are interchangeable though.\textsuperscript{511} On some occasions, \textit{ahl} denotes people like “the people of this town” as read in Q 29:34, “And We shall bring down a punishment from heaven on the people of this town because they violate [God’s order].” Several passages call Muslims to support and express kindness to relatives (\textit{dhū/ dhawū al-qurbā}) as stated in Q 2:177,

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives (\textit{dhaw al-qurbā}), to orphans, the needy, travelers (\textit{ibn al-sabīl}) and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage.\textsuperscript{512}

\textsuperscript{509} See for instance Q 28:29, “Once Moses had fulfilled the term and was travelling with his family (\textit{ahlīhi}), he caught sight of a fire on the side of the mountain and said to his family (\textit{ahlīhi}), ‘Wait! I have seen a fire. I will bring you news from there, or a burning stick for you to warm yourselves,’”Q 29:32, “Abraham said, ‘But Lot lives there.’ They answered, ‘We know who lives there better than you do. We shall save him and his family (\textit{ahlahu}), except for his wife: she will be one of those who stay behind,’”Q 38:43, “And We restored his family (\textit{ahlahu}) to him, with many more like them: a sign of Our mercy and a lesson to all who understand,”Q 52:26-27, “When we were still with our families (\textit{ahlīnā}) [on earth] we used to live in fear but God has been gracious to us and saved us from the torment of intense heat.”

\textsuperscript{510} See for example Q 12:93, “Take this shirt of mine and lay it over my father’s face: he will recover his sight. Then bring your whole family (\textit{bi-ahlīkum}) back to me,” Q 83:31, “Joke about them when they got back to their own people (\textit{ahlīhi}) well please.”

\textsuperscript{511} See for instance Q 11:45-46, “Noah called out to his Lord, saying, ‘My Lord, my son was one of my family (\textit{ahlī}), and Your promise is true, and You are most just of all judges.’ God said, ‘Noah, he was not one of your family (\textit{ahlīka}). What he did was not right. Do not ask Me for things you know nothing about. I am warning you not to be foolish,’”Q 11:81, “They [the messengers] said, ‘Lot, we are your Lord’s messengers. They will not reach you. Leave with your household (\textit{ahlīka}) in the dead of night, and let none of you turn back. Only your wife will suffer the fate that befalls the others. Their appointed time is the morning: is the morning not near?’”Q 15:65, “‘So leave in the dead of the night with your household (\textit{bi-ahlīka}), and walk behind them. Let none of you look back. Go where you are commanded,’”Q 20:10, “He saw a fire and said to his people (\textit{ahlīhi}), ‘Stay here, I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you a flaming brand from it or find some guidance there,’”Q 20:29-30, “And give me a helper from my family (\textit{ahlī}), my brother Aaron,”Q 66:6, “Believers, guard yourselves and your families (\textit{ahlīkum}) against a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which stand angels, stern and strong; angels who never disobey God’s commands to them, but do as they are ordered.”

\textsuperscript{512} See also Q 4:36, “Worship God; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents (\textit{walidayn}), to relatives (\textit{dhill qurbā}), to orphans, to the needy, to neighbours near and far, to travelers in need (\textit{ibn al-sabīl}), and to your slaves. God does not like arrogant, boastful people,” Q 8:41, “Know that one-fifth of your battle gains belongs to God and the Messenger, to close relatives (\textit{dhillī al-qurbā}) and orphans, to the needy and travellers (\textit{ibn al-sabīl}), if you believe in God and the revelation We sent down to Our servant on the day of decision, the day when the two forces met in battle. God has power over all things,” Q 16:90, “God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives (\textit{dhillī al-qurbā}) and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you, so that you may take heed.”
Correct belief and practice entails the proper treatment of relatives according to the divine decree. It is noteworthy that these verses mention relatives (\textit{dhī al-qurbā}) often alongside with travelers (\textit{ibn al-sabīl}) thus assuming that this kinsfolk are settled and local. As such, the qur’anic understanding does not regard relatives as being separate from one’s own locality. They are an essential part of one’s social life. The term \textit{qurbā} (nearness) not only denotes the blood ties of close family relationships but also the spatial closeness meaning that \textit{qarīb} (near) means those who are near to someone and who share in one’s personal life.

As Giladi observes, the Qur’an underlines the notion of the nuclear family and many of the Meccan and Medinan verses stress that the basic, biological family of father, mother and children is a natural, social unit of society.\textsuperscript{513} These verses state that the creation of two different genders is an expression of God’s omnipotence.\textsuperscript{514} Verses such as Q 30:21 highlight that the typical elements of human conjugal life, common dwelling, love and mercy are a blessing from God, “Another of His signs is that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquility: He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect.” A striking expression is used in Q 2:187 where husband and wife are

\textsuperscript{513}Giladi, “Family,” 175.
\textsuperscript{514}See for instance Q 35:11, “It is God who created you from dust and later from a drop of fluid; then He made you into two sexes; no female conceives or gives birth without His knowledge; no person grows old or has his life cut short, except in accordance with a Record: all this is easy for God,” Q 39:6, “He created you all from a single being, from which He made its mate; He gave you four kinds of livestock in pairs; He creates you in your mothers’ wombs, in one stage after another, in threefold depths of darkness. Such is God, your Lord; He holds control, there is no god but Him. How can you turn away?” Q 42:11, “The Creator of the heavens and earth. He made mates for you from among yourselves – and for the animals too – so that you may multiply. There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing,” Q 53:45, “That He Himself created the two sexes, male and female,” Q 75:39, “Fashioning from it the two sexes, male and female,” Q 78:8, “Did We not create you in pairs?”
depicted as garments (libās) for each other, “You [believers] are permitted to lie with your wives during the night of the fast: they are [close] as garments to you, as you are to them.” Husband and wife in this respect are therefore seen as protections of each other. In order to provide that safety and warmth they need to be skin close – just like the garment. They cover one another’s weaknesses, conceal each other’s faults, and provide security and comfort. It is therefore difficult to see them performing this divine call while being separate from each other. That spouses were created by God to find tranquility within each other defies practices of forceful segregation and separation. The close relationship between husband and wife is crucial for human well being as these verses indicate.

Parents need to be treated with the utmost respect as they both invested much in their children, from the moment of conception through pregnancy and lactation to weaning and upbringing. The believer is not only instructed to take care of them physically, serve them in the best way but also to include them constantly in one’s personal supplication as Q 14:40-41 states in the words of Prophet Abraham which is usually recited at the end of every ritual prayer (ṣalāt), “Lord, grant that I and my offspring may keep up the prayer. Our Lord, accept my request. Our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and the believers on the Day of Reckoning.” Q 71:28 echoes a similar prayer, “Lord, forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer.”

Q 31:14-15 is interesting in that it invites good behavior towards parents – as long as they do not deviate from the divine path – after being thankful to God,
We have commanded people to be good to their parents: their mothers carried them, with strain upon strain, and it takes two years to wean them. Give thanks to Me and your parents – all will return to Me. If they strive to make you associate with Me anything about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet keep their company in this life according to what is right, and follow the path of those who turn to Me. You will all return to Me in the end, and I will tell you everything that you have done.\textsuperscript{515}

This is a recurring formula in the Qur’an in which the commandment “to be good to one’s parents” (\textit{wa-bi-l-wālidayni iḥsānan}) is presented as second in importance only to the commandment “to worship no god but God” as seen also in Q 2:83,

Remember when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: ‘Worship none but God; be good to your parents and kinsfolk, to orphans and the poor; speak good words to all people; keep up the prayer and pray the prescribed alms.’ Then all but a few of you turned away and paid no heed.\textsuperscript{516}

Children are depicted as vital for the core family in this world and seen also as blessing not only here but also in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{517} These positive portrayals notwithstanding, the Qur’an warns however that even among one’s own family there can

\textsuperscript{515} See also 46:15, “We have commanded the human being to be good to his parents – his mother struggled to carry him and struggled to give birth to him; his bearing and weaning took a full thirty months – and when he has grown to manhood and reached the age of forty to say, ‘Lord, help me to be truly grateful for Your favours to me and to my parents; help me to do good work that pleases You; make my offspring good. I turn to You; I am one of those who devote themselves to You.’”

\textsuperscript{516} See also Q 17:22-27, “Set up no other god beside God, or you will end up disgraced and forsaken. Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say no word that shows impatience with them, and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them respectfully and lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, ‘Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little.’ Your Lord knows best what is in your heart. If you are good, He is most forgiving to those who return to Him. Give relatives (\textit{dhī al-qurbā}) their due, and the needy, and travelers (\textit{ibn al-sabīl}) – do not squander your wealth wastefully.”

\textsuperscript{517} See for instance Q 13:38, “We sent messengers before you and gave them wives and offspring.” Q 16:72, “And it is God who has given you spouses from amongst yourselves and through them He has given you children and grandchildren and provided you with good things. How can they believe in falsehood and deny God’s blessings?” Q 25:74, “Those who pray, ‘Our Lord, give us joy in our spouses and offspring. Make us good examples to those who are aware of You.’” Q 52:21, “We unite the believers with their offspring who followed them in faith – We do not deny them any of the rewards for their deeds: each person is in pledge for his own deeds.”
be hostility towards belief as read in Q 64:14, “Believers, even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies – beware of them – but if you overlook their offences, forgive them, pardon them, then God is all forgiving, all merciful.” However, as the verse indicates forbearance and compassion are still emphasized in the treatment of one’s family. Q 64:15 also alerts the believers not to be overly attached to the own children, “Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with God.” In other instances, Scripture tells that they are of no avail and no support in the hereafter, “People, be mindful of your Lord and fear a day when no parent will take the place of their child, nor a child take the place of their parent, in any way. God’s promise is true, so do not let the present life delude you about God” (Q 31:33).  

The previous assessment on the relational and social aspect of human beings (al-insān) demonstrates that the Qur’an views family ties and bonds with relatives as a blessing from God which needs to be valued. These sacred ties between parents, their children and their relatives cannot be broken and need to be nourished and cultivated. That the Qur’an assigns husband and wife, parents and children a special place has important moral and ethical ramifications. If God Himself does not allow the ties to be broken, any human effort to radically sever these relationships are an offence and dishonor to God. Such unions are established by God in this world so that humanity finds solace within each other and maintain a stable and emotional balance in their personal life.

518 See also Q 35:18, “No burdened soul will bear the burden of another: even if a heavily laden soul should cry for help, none of its load would be carried, not even by a close relative,” or Q 60:3, “Neither your kinsfolk nor your children will be any use to you on the Day of Resurrection: He will separate you out. God sees everything you do.”
lives. The verses especially on husband and wife mentioning tranquility as a key factor show that only too well. It is therefore vital to preserve these familial ties and not allow them to be broken by any outside forces.

Present day political and legal practices within the realities of immigration have led to some wrong decisions to forcefully uncut these relational ties within the smaller family. They have not only caused emotional and psychological pain among migrant families but also led to a larger instability among societies as migrants cannot be productive and constructive citizens in their new environment without the needed mental support the family unit provides. Such practices of forced separation and segregation need to be therefore seriously questioned.

4.4 Teaching Adam the Names

He taught Adam all the names, then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful (ṣādiqīna).’ They said, ‘May You be glorified! We have knowledge only of what You have taught us. Indeed, You are the All Knowing and All Wise.’ Then He said, ‘O Adam, tell them the names of these.’ When he told them their names, He [God] said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’ (Qur’an 2:31-33)

While the previous verse asserted that God has superior knowledge to the angels, now the narrator claims that even Adam’s knowledge is superior to that of the angels. Certainly, this knowledge is not inherent to Adam but God-given. God has taught Adam the names, all of them. This section will explore some of the exegetical material in order to understand how qur’anic commentators have interpreted these lines.

After exploring the various interpretations on Q 2:31-33, a brief summary on the theology of the divine names will be given. In examining this particular account on the “teaching of the
names,” Muslim theologians maintained that it refers also to the divine names of God. They were not only taught to Adam, the first human being, but he and all humanity were endowed with them explaining their superiority over all other beings. Without going into the rich theological details of the concept of the divine names, it is important to provide a basic understanding as this will bear ramifications on the identity formation of human beings and a deconstruction of imaginary borders.

Closely linked to the understanding of the divine names is the importance and acquisition of knowledge and intellectual progress of the human being including learning languages. The whole account in Q 2:30-33 stresses the importance of God’s knowledge and how humanity is elevated by giving a share of it and the potential to further their intellectual abilities. If one looks at how many times the root ‘-l-m (to know) appears in the creation narrative in this chapter, it becomes obvious that there is a strong focus on knowledge in general. God’s knowledge is more complete than that of the angels because He states, “I know that what you do not know.” The angels in turn admit in all humility that they have no knowledge except that what God has taught them. Human beings are taught the divine names by God and their knowledge is therefore more complete than that of the angels. God is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise and He has knowledge of the seen and the hidden worlds. As the story progresses, we read that Adam received certain words by God to call upon Him in repentance after he had disobeyed. God turns towards him accepting his plea or his words which again essentially are from Him. These observations are important in that they stress the significance of human intellectual progress in terms of acquiring useful knowledge. It also demonstrates that it is important to obtain communication skills in
form of languages in order to articulate oneself. In the context of developing a theology of migration, the issue of language and education is key. Both migrant and host need to ensure that the divine emphasis on knowledge is equally mirrored in their own lives. On the migrant side this means to exert effort in acquiring the new language and skills in order to be a productive citizen and member of the new society. On the host side, it is to guarantee that migrants have access to these intellectual resources. The Qur’an over and over highlights the importance of knowledge and language and we will discuss this a bit further in the subsequent sections.

Closely linked to the idea of khalīfa or vicegerency and the teaching of the names, is the Qur’anic verse on the notion of the “trust” (amāna) as mentioned in Q 33:72, “We offered the trust (al-amāna) to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it; humankind undertook it – they have always been very inept and rash.” This passage needs to be considered into the discussion of khalīfa and the teaching of the names because it is the only direct parallel to Q 2:30 in its view of humanity. Furthermore, it is frequently cited in the works of classic and contemporary Muslim authors in relation to Q 2:30 as will be shown later. In turning to some examples of the commentarial tradition, I aim to demonstrate how these themes can be uncovered and used for articulating a theology of migration.

Four outcomes of this section are expected: First, the concept of the fundamental dignity of human life is also mirrored in this passage. Second, the survey on the exegetical literature demonstrates that humanity has been equipped by God with a strong potential to fulfill diverse tasks in various contexts. This notion is closely linked with the concept of khalīfa. Such an
understanding counters individual feelings of inferiority and a lack of self-esteem. On the other hand, it makes evident that every human being can contribute to the community in the most profound way. Third, human beings carrying the sparks of the divine attributes within them possess an expansive nature connecting them to the entire universe. Hence, their identity cannot be reduced to a territorial or national one alone. Fourth, the teaching and acquisition of knowledge as a God initiated act has the greatest virtue and needs to be pursued and preserved regardless of the various contexts. As explained above, this also entails that the proper means and framework need to be established so that humanity can flourish on the path of obtaining knowledge. This becomes especially important in the context of the migration discourse. Many migrants do not have fair access to educational institutions by facing too many obstacles or are denied or discriminated by the receiving community when trying to seek an education. On the other hand, there are also migrants who simply do not prioritize enough the acquisition of the local language or are not interested in the pursuit of learning in general. The Qur’anic accounts challenge such passive or discriminatory attitudes by calling migrant and host to their responsibility.

What is central in the exegetical discussion on Q 2:31-33 is the question on the “names.” The exegetes’ energy is dedicated to the reflection on what it was that God taught Adam as the progenitor of humankind. The reader does not receive any information on that in the text. The Qur’an also does not provide information on how God taught Adam all the names. Early Muslim exegetes like al-Ṭabarî, to begin with, suggest that God presented Adam all the things while teaching him their names. In quoting traditions by Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Qataḍa, Al-Rabî’ and
Ibn Zayd, we receive more information on the names: Adam learned the names of all the “nations of creatures” on earth, the names of the angels and of his offspring or all of them at once. Ṭabarī favors the opinion that the meaning of the names point to the angels and to Adam’s offspring simply because the *hum* in ‘aradahum (He presented them) is used by the Arabs to refer to humans and angels. According to Ṭabarī, all other things are referred either by -*hā* (for singular use) or -*hunna* (for plural cases). He admits though that the Qur’an also employs the use of -*hum* as in the case of Q 24:45 when it refers to a combination of humans and other beings and hence leaves the possibility open for a wider interpretation, “And God created each moving creature (dābba) out of fluid: some of them (fa minhum) crawl on their bellies, some (wa minhum) walk on two legs, and some (wa minhum) on four. God creates whatever He will; God has power over everything.” As John Cooper comments, “Ṭabarī allows however the interpretation of Ibn ṬAbbās in which he gives examples from categories of creatures other than man and the angels, and suggests that he was perhaps interpreting according to the recension of Ubayy who has ‘arada-hā.’”

When God asked the angels to tell Him the names of these “if they are truthful” (ṣādiqīna) this, according to Ṭabarī, challenges the angels to show the corrupt nature of human creation. Two traditions going back to Ibn ṬAbbās are cited in order to demonstrate that the angels were wrong in their assumption that the entire human race is prone to destructive behavior. Ṭabarī expands on this particular divine challenge to the angels by stating,

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Now, if you [angels] do not know the names of these things which I [God] have presented to you, which are existing, created things, you can see in front of your own eyes and [if] someone besides you knows them through My having taught him, [then you must agree that] it is all the more [likely to be the case] that you should not know about created, but not yet existing, things, and about existing things which are hidden from your eyes. So do not ask of Me things which you do not know about; I know better what is proper for you and what is proper for My creatures. 522

The angels then realize their mistaken attitude and insufficieny in knowledge, as Ṭabarī remarks, and then turn in repentance to God.

For Ibn Kathīr, God’s teaching of the names to Adam meant that He gave him knowledge of the universe, from the animals to the stars, including their smallest particles, their characteristics, and their actions. 523 This is followed by a quote from the Qur’ān scholar ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) who states that Adam probably mentioned the names of objects in the creation while pointing to them. 524 For Ibn Kathīr, God teaching Adam all the names is only evidence for the great honor bestowed on him. The angels however were not the receivers of the special blessing of knowledge. 525

In the same vein, Zamakhsharī adds to the discussion that God not only showed Adam the names of all the species (al-ajnās) but also taught him about each object’s characteristics and what its benefits might be in this world and in the next. 526 He states further that the central goal of this Qur’ānic verse is to teach the being of the referents (dhawāt al-musammiyyāt) and to

526 Al-Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashshāf, Vol.1, 253. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 286.
examine their realities and what God has placed in them, in terms of characteristics and secrets.\textsuperscript{527} For Zamakhshari’s Adam’s acquisition of the names by God denote most profoundly the unique blessing of knowledge and rationality. The knowledge of the names is what makes a human being a true vicegerent of God as he states:

\begin{quote}
It is God’s response to the angels’ declaration that He has deputized (\textit{istakhlafa}) those who wreak havoc and spill blood. He is saying that those He has chosen as vicegerents are worthy by virtue of the scientific benefits, which are the foundations (\textit{\'usūl}) of all benefits. He showed them [the angels] all of this and demonstrated to them some of the most beautiful advantages of their vicegerency (\textit{istikhlāfihim}) in His saying, “For I know that what you do not know.”\textsuperscript{528}
\end{quote}

Similar to Zamakhshari, Rāzī founds himself in awe about the fact that God has bestowed Adam and the human family with the blessing of rationality. The angels in comparison do not posses such knowledge.\textsuperscript{529} And then not unlike the previous exegetes, Rāzī explains that the meaning of names are the description of things (\textit{sifāt}), their attributes (\textit{nu’ūt}) and characteristics (\textit{khawās}). His six \textit{mas'ala} (question or topic) notes that knowledge is the most honorable of all things. Adam’s perfection is therefore connected to the virtue of knowledge.\textsuperscript{530}

For Bayḍāwī the teaching of the names likewise implies that God inspired in Adam the knowledge of the nature of things (\textit{dhawāt al-ashyā}), their characteristics and their names, as well as the foundation of sciences, the laws behind the professions and the working of their

\textsuperscript{527} Al-Zamakhshari, \textit{Al-Kashshāf}, Vol.1, 253. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 287.
\textsuperscript{528} Al-Zamakhshari, \textit{Al-Kashshāf}, Vol.1, 253. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 288.
\textsuperscript{529} Al-Rāzī, \textit{Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr}, Vol.2, 175. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 292.
instruments. The honor bestowed on Adam can be partially attributed to humanity’s gift of knowledge and creativity.

While the examples given from the traditional and rationalist schools of Qur’anic exegesis did not discuss whether the names also relate to God’s qualities or attributes, it is in the mystical tradition with Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī and his disciples like ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad Jāmī (d. 898/1492) where we find this connection to be made. In this context, there is particularly an appeal to the ḥadīth about God creating human beings according to the divine form or ṣūra as previously noted.

In his summary of Jāmī’s thought Johnston highlights that the names point to the qualities of God. According to Chittick, the name Allah includes all divine attributes and in this sense Adam received a share of them. The first prophet becomes therefore a first and comprehensive mirror of the divine.

In this context, the “hidden treasure” ḥadīth discussed earlier comes to the forefront. Through the creation of humanity, God’s beauty and perfection will be known. Being God’s khalīfa, the human being combines elements from the physical and the spiritual world. Chittick explains that it is this dual aspect of human nature which made them deserving of the title khalīfa. On the one hand, human beings possess the attribute of lordship allowing them to oversee and act in creation. Servanthood, on the other hand, enables humanity to relate to the rest

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531 Al-Baydāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, Vol.1, 69. See also Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 299.
532 Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 313. See also Chittick, Principles of Ibn Al-ʿArabī’s Cosmology, 144.
533 Johnston, Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text, 313.
of creation. Servanthood precedes vicegerency since a person cannot represent someone without following the master’s command.

In Said Nursi we notice a synthesis of most of the mentioned aspects. Some authors have noted that Nursi resists any compartmentalization. Does he follow the traditional, rationalist or mystical strand? His writings certainly reveal a mixture and embrace many elements from all the different streams. Yet, he also does not refrain from critiquing certain points. He clearly does not identify himself as a Sufi shaykh but as someone who has received his training in the widespread madrasas of the tarīqa schools in eastern Anatolia, the influence is obvious in his tafsīr.

When it comes to Nursi’s interpretation of God teaching Adam the names, for him, seemingly minor events like these bear universal principles concerning all humanity. These qur’anic accounts are the tips of general laws. In Nursi’s words,

It was the teaching due to humanity’s comprehensive disposition (câmiyet-i istidat) countless sciences (ulûm), and numerous all-embracing branches of knowledge (funûn) about the universe, and extensive learning about the Creator’s attributes (şuûnât) and qualities (evsâf), which afforded humans superiority over not only the angels but also the heavens and earth and mountains in the question of bearing of the Supreme Trust (emanet-i kübrâ). And like the Qur’an states that through his comprehensive disposition, the human being is spiritual vicegerent (halife-i mânevi) of the earth [...].

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534 Chittick, _Principles of Ibn Al-ʿArabī’s Cosmology_, 15.
535 Murata and Chittick, _The Vision of Islam_, 126.
536 See for example Colin Turner’s discussion on the difficulty of locating Nursi within the larger body of Muslim intellectual thought in his _The Qur’an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi’s Epistles of Light_ (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2013), 2-4.
538 Nursi, _Sözler_, 334.
539 Nursi, _Sözler_, 334.
Nursi calls the *khalīfa* in this passage the spiritual vicegerent (*halife-i mânevi*) of the earth. It is not entirely clear what he means by that.

In his Twentieth Word dealing with prophetic miracles, Nursi regards Adam being taught the names as the greatest miracle (*mucize-i kübrâ*) of Adam.\(^{540}\) In contrast to other prophets, Adam is the father of humanity, all the prophets and the inaugurator of the office of prophethood. As such, Nursi explains, Adam’s miracle points to the final points of all human attainment and progress.\(^ {541}\) This is an interesting treatise as it certainly indicates signs of modernist leanings when Nursi considers the role of the messengers not only as leaders for humanity in terms of spiritual and moral progress (*terakkiyât-i mânevi*) but also as forerunners of scientific and technological progress (*terakkiyât-i maddiye*).\(^ {542}\) However, as we have observed in pre-modern exegetical writings, the teaching of the names was already connected with the God given blessing of rationality and scientific knowledge before Nursi’s time. In Nursi we see it only more strongly articulated.

For Nursi then, all the accomplishments of learning, scientific progress and technological advancements are simply implied by the qur’anic account of the teaching of the names.\(^ {543}\) The innate nature of human beings is created in such a comprehensive way that they can flourish on the diverse paths of knowledge and intellectual endeavour. Nursi elaborates in so much detail on this aspect and the subject of the teaching of the names covers almost all chapters of his six-

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\(^{541}\) Nursi, *Sözler*, 354.

\(^{542}\) Nursi, *Sözler*, 343-344.

\(^{543}\) Nursi, *Sözler*, 354.
thousand-page commentary. It is impossible to do justice in summarizing his thoughts on this issue in a comprehensive manner.

Suffice it to say that in Nursi’s theology all attainments and perfections, all learning and progress, and all sciences have an elevated reality which is based on one of the divine names.\textsuperscript{544} In this sense, every branch of science or subject of knowledge such as medicine, chemistry, architecture, law, biology, physics etc. is also a manifestation and reflection of one of the divine names. He states, “On being based on the Name, which is concealed under numerous veils and has numerous manifestations and different spheres, the sciences and arts and attainments find their perfection and become reality. They are not some incomplete and deficient shadow.”\textsuperscript{545}

One of the examples Nursi provides is the science and art of medicine. It is to his mind a limited reflection of God’s knowledge as the Healer (\textit{al-shāfi‘}). The science of engineering is connected to the reality of God’s attribute of All-Just and Determiner.\textsuperscript{546} The vast branch of law similarly displays only a glimpse of God’s attribute of justice and balance (\textit{al-‘adl}). The science of food and nutrition would then be related to one facet of God’s name the Provider, Nourisher and Sustainer (\textit{al-razzāq}). Similar analogies can be made with other areas of knowledge. Since God’s knowledge is infinite, perfect and complete all other human endeavors to seek knowledge are only limited and consequently dim reflections of the divine names. The Qur’an puts it in this way, “If all the trees on earth were pens and all the seas, with seven more seas besides, [were ink,] still God’s words would not run out: God is almighty and all wise” (Q 31:27). In Nursi’s

\textsuperscript{544} Nursi, \textit{Sözler}, 354.  
\textsuperscript{545} Nursi, \textit{Sözler}, 355.  
\textsuperscript{546} Nursi, \textit{Sözler}, 355.
words, the Qur’an hence strikes the hand of encouragement on humanity’s back and urges it to the highest peaks, the furthest limits, the final degrees, which has not been reached at the present degree of progress. To sum up, while the miracles of other messengers all point to a specific wonder of human art or craft, Adam’s miracle of being taught the names contains in succinct form, besides the bases of those crafts, the index of the sciences and branches of knowledge. Humankind is therefore urged to pursue these wonders and perfections and progress on this intellectual path.

Said Nursi, following the tradition of other Muslim gnostic thinkers like Ibn ʿArabī, also identifies the names taught by God to Adam or human beings in general as none other than the beautiful names of God Himself. Humankind, as he maintains, has been created as a “comprehensive summary” of the universe, an index of the vast book that is the cosmos, and as such best placed among the creation to act as a mirror for all the divine names. The small samples are placed in his being so that he becomes not only a place of demonstration (mażhar) for those names, but a willing and purposeful demonstrator (muţhir) of them. This brings us to a brief overview of the theology of the divine names in the Islamic tradition. To reiterate, this concept has important ramifications for understanding the dignity and sanctity of human life, questions of identity formation, and a deconstruction of imaginary borders as they relate to migration issues.

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547 Nursi, Sözler, 355-356.
548 Turner, The Qur’an Revealed, 178.
549 Nursi, İşârât iîl-I’çaz, 37-38.
The Qur’an refers to its own verses as signs (āyāt) to explain that all in the Qur’an has a significance by revealing something about the Creator of the universe. But these signs are not limited to scriptural signs only as the Qur’an tells its audience. Among the range of God’s signs are those not only displayed throughout the entire cosmos but also signs pointing to God in the most inner selves of human beings. Q 51:20-21 puts it succinctly, “On earth there are signs for those with sure faith and in yourselves too, do you not see?” or “Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know” (Q 30:22). Hence, not only scriptural signs, prophetic signs in a narrower sense but also natural signs within God’s creation and His creatures give news of God. Everything is pointing to God’s creative activity in the universe and invites believers to reflect and ponder on these signs. They convey messages sent by God to humanity who are expected to read them. The Qur’an therefore challenges those who refuse to heed the signs and are ignorant of them, “And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to” (Q 12:105) or “Who does more wrong than someone who, when messages from his Lord are recited to him, turns away from them? We shall inflict retribution on the guilty” (Q 32:22).

In Islamic cosmology, these signs displayed in the universe and within human beings came to be understood as reflections or manifestations of God’s “most beautiful names” (al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā). The Prophetic tradition mentions the number ninety-nine for the beautiful names which are mentioned throughout the Qur’an. Islamic theology and its understanding of the

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divine was based on these qur’anic passages mentioning the names of God.\textsuperscript{551} The locus classicus for listing the divine names in the literature of qur’anic commentary is Q 17:110 “Say, ‘Call on God (\textit{Allāh}), or on the Lord of Mercy (\textit{al-Raḥmān}) – whatever names you call Him, the most beautiful names (\textit{al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā}) belong to Him” and also Q 59:22-24, which includes a number of divine epithets,

He is God (\textit{Allāh}): there is no god other than Him. It is He who knows (\textit{ʿālim}) what is hidden (\textit{al-ghayb}) as well what is in the open (\textit{al-shahāda}), He is the Lord of Mercy (\textit{al-Raḥmān}), the Giver of Mercy (\textit{al-Raḥīm}). He is God (\textit{Allāh}): there is no god other than Him, the Controller (\textit{al-malik}), the Holy One (\textit{al-quddūs}), Source of Peace (\textit{al-salām}), Granter of Security (\textit{al-muʿmin}), Guardian over all (\textit{al-muhaymin}), the Almighty (\textit{al-azīz}), the Compeller (\textit{al-jabbār}), the Truly Great (\textit{al-mutakabbir}); God is far above anything they consider to be His partner. He is God (\textit{Allāh}): the Creator (\textit{al-khāliq}), the Originator (\textit{al-bāriʾ}), the Shaper (\textit{al-muṣawwir}). The most beautiful names (\textit{al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā}) belong to Him. Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Him: He is the Almighty, the Wise.

However the number ninety-nine should not be taken too literally, since the Qur’an easily exhausts this number.\textsuperscript{552} Other qur’anic passages in which the attributes of God are consistently called God’s “most beautiful names” (\textit{al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā}) can be found in Q 7:180 and Q 20:8.\textsuperscript{553} Muslim scholars distinguished between the divine essence (\textit{al-dhāt}) and the attributes (\textit{sifāt}) of God. As Böwering points out, these two terms cannot be located in the Qur’an. They were developed outside the qur’anic discourse.\textsuperscript{554}

\textsuperscript{551} Böwering, “God and his Attributes,” 318.
\textsuperscript{552} Murata and Chittick, The Vision of Islam, 58.
\textsuperscript{553} Q 7:180, “The most beautiful names (\textit{al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā}) belong to God: use them to call on Him, and keep away from those who abuse His names – they will be requited for what they do,” and Q 20:8, “God – there is no god but Him – the most beautiful names (\textit{al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā}) belong to Him.”
\textsuperscript{554} Böwering, “God and his Attributes,” 320.
The attributes are meant to describe God in His various aspects and dimensions. In that sense, they are not abstract. Based on the Qur’anic data on the divine attributes, Muslim theologians developed categories or lists to systematize the divine names. In books on the names of God, readers can find different classifications articulated by Muslim scholars. One case in point is the distinction between God’s Names of essence, attributes and acts. Or the categories of God’s jalāl and jamāl aspects which describe God both as being distant and near to human beings; He is both transcendent and immanent. This divine duality understood in the Qur’anic light is not describing opposites but complimentary modes of God’s being. The Qur’an alerts believers to both fear God’s punishment and wrath but also to love and worship Him and hence seek His nearness and mercy. The reference to God’s majesty and wrath should drive people nearer to Him rather than frighten them away. The ultimate goal of the revelation is to guide people from distance to God’s nearness. God by His so-called jalālī aspects – His divine attributes of majesty, wrath and sovereignty – traditionally characterize His transcendence, distance and incomparability (tanzīh). The other mode through which the Qur’anic voice speaks, is the jamālī aspect of God – traditionally understood to denote divine names of mercy, beauty and kindness. They capture God’s nearness, immanence and comparability to His servants as described by the term tashbīh.

The names of tanzīh are supposed to invoke in the believer a sense of awe and fear and ideally encourage him to seek refuge in God from God’s own wrath as articulated by a famous

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555 Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 64.
Prophetic supplication, “I seek refuge in Thy good-pleasure from Thy anger, I seek refuge in Thy pardon from Thy punishment, I seek refuge in Thee from Thee.” Examples of the names of tanzīḥ denoting God’s wrath and majesty as they appear in the Qur’an include the Powerful (al-qadīr, Q 2:20), the Mighty (al-ʿazīz, Q 2:129), the Strong (al-qawī, Q 11:66), the subduing Dominator (al-qahhār, Q 12:39), the Great (al-kabīr, Q 22:62), the High (al-ʿalī, Q 31:30), the overpowering Restorer (al-jabbār, Q 59:23) and the Glorious (al-majīd, Q 85:15).

The names of tashbīḥ – those denoting nearness and mercy – can also be found throughout the Qur’an. Some instances of their occurrences are the one “turned to” humans with favor (al-tawwāb, Q 2:37), the All-Hearing (al-samīʿ, Q 2:127), the Kind (al-raʾūf, Q 2:143), the Oft-Forgiver (al-ghafūr, Q 2:173), the Gentle (al-ḥalīm, Q 4:12) and the Pardoner (al-ʿafūw, Q 4:43). God grants forgiveness as the Forgiving (al-ghāfir, Q 7:155), He is the one who answers prayers (al-mujīb, Q 11:61), is All-Seeing (al-bāṣīr, Q 17:1), and ready to acknowledge human gratitude (al-shakūr, Q 35:30). He is the All-Forgiving (al-ghaffār, Q 38:66), the good Provider (al-razzaq, Q 51:58), the Benevolent (al-laṭīf, Q 67:14), and is also identified as the Loving (al-wadūd, Q 85:14).

The Qur’an refers to the fact that these names of beauty and mercy represent God’s nature more accurately than the names of majesty and wrath. God’s mercy embraces all things as Q 7:156 states, “God said, ‘My punishment I bring on whoever I will, but My mercy embraces all things.’” In another instance in Q 6:12, the Qur’an maintains, “Say, ‘To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth?’ Say, ‘To God. He has taken it upon Himself to be merciful.’”

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557 Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 70.
558 See also Büwering, “God and his Attributes,” 321-322.
Similarly, Q 6:54 states, “Your Lord has taken it on Himself to be merciful. If any of you has foolishly done a bad deed, and afterwards repented and mended his ways, God is most forgiving and most merciful.” The Qur’an does not present a Creator who is only waiting to punish people. God in His capacity of being the all-just only calls those servants to account who have exceeded their bounds and have harmed other creatures. The idea that God’s mercy takes precedence over His wrath is a fundamental tenet in Islamic thought and is most apparent by the fact that it is singled out in the beginning of every chapter of the Qur’an except chapter 9 with the famous Basmala, “In the Name of God, the Lord of Mercy (al-Raḥmān), the Giver of Mercy (al-Raḥīm).”

These manifestations of the names of God – His power, goodness, kindness, generosity, wisdom, justice, mercy and many other divine qualities – are displayed throughout the entire cosmos or the so-called “Book of the Universe” (kitāb al-kāʾināt) in the form of signs (āyāt) pointing to God. God reveals and displays His most beautiful attributes in the creation. The natural world is therefore full of āyāt Allāh (God’s signs) which can be read and deciphered by divine guidance. These attributes of God are accessible and visible anywhere and at any moment. They are not limited to a certain spatial reality and it is for this reason that the Qur’an considers the entire universe a sacred place of prostration (masjid) in which all beings perform their innate duties according to their created dispositions (lisān al-ḥāl). With respect to the cosmos for being a majestic place of worship, glorification and praise of God Q 22:18 states, “Do you not realize that everything in the heavens and earth submits to God: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees and the moving creatures (al-dawāb)? So do many human beings, though
for many others torment is due?” In another passage one reads, “Do you not see that all those who are in the heavens and earth praise God, as do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification: God has full knowledge of what they do” (Q 24:41). Such statements defy therefore a division of sacredness or assigning a specific territory more significance than others. God is remembered and glorified everywhere. God’s universe as a whole is essentially a sanctified one.

While the divine names do belong in an absolute and primary way to God since He is the only Real (al-haqq) as scholars like Ibn ʿArabī claim, all beings in the universe are only “mirrors” of the divine showing these attributes in a limited and dim manner. They are manifestations, reflections or simply pale shadows of the ultimate source of perfection and beauty. All attributes belong in an absolute way to God, while beings display them only in a relative, secondary or metaphorical manner. Hence, they cannot claim any ownership of the attributes of power, goodness, kindness, mercy, knowledge, justice, forgiveness, patience, generosity or other divine names. In short all the qualities which God expresses in the creation do belong to Him alone. In other words, every quality and characteristic of things that has a positive side to it derives from a divine quality and owes its existence to God. Everything good, praiseworthy, permanent and real belongs to God. Therefore “Praise belongs to God” (Q 1:2) and to no one else.

As noted earlier, the creation of Adam and God teaching Him all the Names was taken up by many Muslim authorities to mean that God also gave a share of His power and freedom to humanity. God taught them and endowed them with the divine names. In this sense, every human
being is a unique configuration or combination of the divine names. While other beings due to their creational capacity can only display a limited number of the divine attributes, human beings are capable to express these names in a fuller form. They carry samples or snippets of the divine attributes in themselves. They can be generous, kind, merciful, patient, knowledgeable, just, loving, gentle, forgiving though only in a limited way in trying to display God’s attributes. God, however, being the ultimate source of that perfection owns these Names in an absolute way.

The Qur’an does not employ the same similar Christian concept of the *imago Dei* when talking about the creation of human beings. It is clear however that the Qur’anic discourse does state that humanity is able to live in conformity with the divine attributes. As such, they can be merciful, express kindness and love, act justly, show patience and grant forgiveness to those who have harmed them.⁵⁵⁹ The comparison of God with the human being as “made after His image” (ʿalā šūratihi) is not cited in the Qur’an as noted few times. It is rather a development of ḥadīth literature. Whereas the Qur’an stresses that “nothing is like unto him” (laysa ka-mithlihi Shay’un, Q 42:11), there is still something “God-like” within human beings as expressed by the Qur’anic passage that “God breathed into him (Adam) from His spirit (rūḥī).”⁵⁶⁰

Many Muslim authorities therefore maintain that it is simply impossible to love a Creator who is utterly inaccessible and transcendent from human life.⁵⁶¹ Human beings can conceive of God in human attributes. God is a personal God as expressed in verses like Q 2:115, “The East and the West belong to God: wherever you turn, there is His Face. God is all pervading and all

⁵⁶⁰ Böwering, “God and his Attributes,” 320.
knowing” or Q 50:16, “We created the human being – We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein.”

As Murata explains, throughout Islamic history, Muslim scholars of the legal school and the kalām have emphasized the aspect of God’s incomparability (tanzīh). Naturally, this led to the understanding that God is distant and different from His creation. As such, within the creation multiplicity and distinction was highlighted. As a result, distinctive individualism and division among things become more apparent. This is not the case with the other dimension of God’s being – His closeness or (tashbīh). Especially, the spiritual path of Islam as expressed through Sufism maintained that the Creator is close to His creation and that “God’s mercy precedes His wrath.” They highlight that God is near to human beings as read in Q 57:4, “He is with you wherever you are; He sees all that you do” and attempt to discover the sacred ties within the creation and to see the interrelatedness between everything. The finest scholars were those who were able to keep a sensitive balance between the two positions of tanzīh and tashbīh.

It is only by considering these two modes of the divine that a correct understanding of God can be achieved. Generally, these two positions have existed peacefully along each other and were able to check on one another so as to avoid falling into either extreme position.562

If the universe then is a cosmic symphony of the divine names and human beings carry those divine sparks also in their innate nature, an organic link and familiarity with the cosmos can be established. It is only by knowing, loving and acting in accordance with the divine names that a human being can maintain a relationship with the entire creation. Those who cling to the

562 Murata, The Tao of Islam, 9-10.
divine names of nearness or *tashbīh* will find ways of relating to their surroundings as they equally possess qualities of the divine. If these common identity factors are read and deciphered by people, they will not feel alienated or estranged in the universe because God’s sacred presence is partially manifest everywhere. A full revelation of God’s names, His absolute generosity or compassion for instance will take place in the hereafter.

It is through this capacity and endowment with the divine names that human beings can gain what I would like to term a “cosmic identity” enabling them to transcend borders and find a familiarity with everything and hence feel at “home.” Nursi, for instance, alludes to that by stating that the human being is created as a microcosm of the universe and an index of the book of the world. The concepts of the microcosm (‘ālam al-saghīr) and macrocosm (‘ālam al-kabīr) have appeared earlier in Islamic history in the thoughts of other Muslim theologians like Ibn ‘Arabī – terms Muslims employed after they became familiar with Greek thought.

As a microcosm, the human being with both his body and spirit, is a summary of the worlds of the seen and unseen. As Nursi states, humans are not only the loci of divine manifestation but they can also actively display them. This, he says, is implied by what Ibn ‘Arabī said in explanation of the *ḥadīth*, “I was a hidden treasure, so I created creation that they might know Me.” Nursi interprets it as meaning, “I created creation to be a mirror in which I might observe My beauty.”

As pointed out earlier, the concept of knowledge (ʿilm) is key in the creation narrative in *sura al-Baqara* and is closely linked to the notion of the divine names. God endowed human

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563 Nursi, *İşârât ʿil-İʿcaz*, 37.
beings with an intellectual potential and highly values the acquisition of useful knowledge including languages. I say “useful” since the Qur’an also warns against useless talk and speech as attested for example in Q 23:3 when believers are described as those who shun vain conversation. Q 41:26 also describes some talk as frivolous and Q 19:62 depicts a group in the heavenly garden who will only hear “peaceful talk, nothing bad.”

The concept of language is a unique human faculty of primarily verbal expression and this simple fact already points to its great value and importance. When it comes to language the Qur’an uses the word “tongue” (lisān) to refer to language and human speech. Several passages proclaim that the Qur’an was revealed in the Arabic language, for example “In a clear Arabic tongue (bi-lisānin ‘arabiyyin mubīnin)” (Q 26:195). Q 44:58 reads, “We have made this Qur’an easy to understand – in your own language [Prophet] – so that they may take heed” and Q 46:12 states, “Yet the scripture of Moses was revealed before it as a guide and a mercy, and this is a scripture confirming it in the Arabic language to warn those who do evil and bring good news for those who do good.” Another interesting passage maintains, “We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people’s language to make things clear for them” (wa-mā arsalnā min rasūlin illā bi-lisāni qawmihi li-yubayyina lahum) (Q 14:4). This also points to the fact that the socio-linguistic context of the receiving community needs to be taken seriously and that those who try to internalize the qur’anic message and emulate the prophetic examples need to acquire languages in order to articulate themselves to their surrounding. In which other way then can the believer embody and live the message of the Qur’an if not both through bodily language (lisān al-hāl) and verbal language (lisān al-qawli). One without the other remains deficient and runs
contrary to the divine message as Q 61:2-3 asserts, “You who believe, why do you say things and then do not do them? It is most hateful to God that you say things and then do not do them (lima taqūlūna mā lā tafʿalūna).”

Perhaps it was this prophetic aspect of considering the varied socio-linguistic context of every community that led eventually to the widespread translation of the Qur’an in many languages and thus ensuring its “migration” into so many diverse societies and audiences. While there was initial reluctance to translate the Qur’an into other languages, today many readers engage with the qur’anic discourse through their own native languages acknowledging at the same time that the qur’anic Arabic can never be captured fully in a translation. However, this somehow underlines the “migratory” character of the Qur’an being able to step into every community and communicate through the local language. It is therefore not far-fetched to argue that those who intend to internalize this qur’anic attitude should likewise attempt to learn the local language of a new environment. In its “foreignness” the Qur’an was still able to enter its new surrounding and engage deeply with a new audience.

When approaching the Qur’an, we can assess the importance of speech by its own self-description. First of all, it calls itself kalāmullah (the speech of God) and describes itself as a discourse with the whole of creation. The concept of language as the Qur’an demonstrates is multilayered including both an oral and written aspect. While Muslim theologians have refrained from characterizing the Qur’an as a piece of poetic art, its style and eloquence has been taken to see it as a masterpiece. Views like that have also led to the development of the doctrine of the “inimitability of the Qur’an” (i’jāz al-qurʾān). As such, the manner of discourse is important,
beauty and aesthetics in rhetoric play an important role in the Qur’anic world. The Prophet and by extension its faithful audience are constantly called to “say” (qul) and spread the content of the divine message. Scripture is full with the records of well-known prayers and supplications articulated by messengers like Zachariah, Jonah, Joseph and many others. The following Mosaic prayer in Q 20: 27-28 is a case in point, “Untie my tongue so that they may understand my words (wa-uḍḥul ʿuḍdatan min lisānī yafqahū qawlī).”

In terms of knowledge, the Qur’an also employs the terms maʿrifa and hikma (wisdom) along with ‘ilm (knowledge). That hikma or ‘ilm is of great value is reiterated in verses like Q 2:269, “And He gives wisdom (ḥikma) to whoever He will. Whoever is given wisdom (ḥikma) has truly been given much good, but only those with insight bear this in mind.” With regard to ‘ilm, Q 20:114 states, “Oh my Lord, increase me in knowledge (rabbī zidnī ‘ilman).” The Qur’an maintains over and over that human beings generally do not possess knowledge unless God grants it to them. Humanity remains in ignorance until God blesses them with knowledge. This is most explicitly evident in the case of Adam the first human being who is taught by God. The importance of knowledge is furthermore evident through the first revelation of Q 96:1-5, “Read! In the name of your Lord who created: He created the human being from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught you by the pen, who taught the human

564 M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translates Q 20:114 as “Lord increase my knowledge.” However, the Qur’an in general and this verse in particular imply that human beings have no knowledge at all and that only God imparts it. I prefer therefore my own translation above as it is more in line with the original which does not say zidnī ‘ilmī (increase me in my knowledge) but zidnī ‘ilman (increase me in knowledge). This is an important theological nuance.

being what he did not know.” Interestingly, here we find also a reference to the oral (read) and written aspect of knowledge (pen).

In the foreword to his Qur’an translation, Muhammad Asad describes in a poignant way how the Qur’an has influenced Islamic civilization in its quest for knowledge.

Through its insistence on consciousness and knowledge, it engendered among its followers a spirit of intellectual curiosity and independent inquiry, ultimately resulting in that splendid era of learning and scientific research which distinguished the world of Islam at the height of its cultural vigour; and the culture thus fostered by the Qur’an penetrated in countless ways and by-ways into the mind of medieval Europe and gave rise to that revival of Western culture which we call the Renaissance, and thus became in the course of time largely responsible for the birth of what is described as the “age of science”: the age in which we are now living.566

While scholars like Paul E. Walker question that the significance of knowledge as expressed within the Islamic tradition can be traced back to the Qur’an itself, there is no doubt to my mind that Asad’s observation is accurate.567 That knowledge and learning take on a major role within the faith tradition is also evident in the ḥadīth corpus—the second major source in Islam. Numerous Prophetic statements highlight the value of knowledge and how important it is to seek and share it.568 The Prophet Muhammad early on distinguished between beneficial and useless knowledge and warned his followers not to indulge in the latter and to seek constantly refuge from it as following ḥadīth indicates, “Ask God for beneficial knowledge and seek refuge with God from knowledge that is of no benefit.”569 Based on ḥadīth like this theologians like Imam Ghazālī early on attempted to offer classifications of the wide branch of knowledge and

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566 Asad, The Message of the Qurʾān (Dar Al-Andalus: Gibraltar, 1980), Foreword.
established categories like obligatory or meritorious.\textsuperscript{570} My purpose is not to offer a thorough treatment of the place and importance of knowledge in the Islamic tradition. This has been undertaken sufficiently.\textsuperscript{571}

Suffice it to say that the acquisition and transmission of useful knowledge for migrant and host is essential and that it cannot be neglected since it is a duty and obligation. To be a proper \textit{khalīfa} of God on earth means to equip oneself with the necessary knowledge in order to be a productive and constructive caretaker of this earth and an active participant in society. Likewise, it is equally important to impart this useful knowledge into others and establish the framework in which other fellow beings can similarly flourish intellectually and spiritually.

To be God’s vicegerent is not only a privilege but includes tremendous human responsibilities which brings us back to the notion of the trust (\textit{al-amānā}) to which exegetes often referred to when interpreting the notion of \textit{khalīfa} and the concept of the divine names. The Qur’an states in chapter 33:72, “We offered the trust (\textit{al-amānā}) to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it; humankind undertook it— they have always been very inept and rash.” God has entrusted something precious to human beings, and they are to hold it for Him. As the word already indicates, they have to return the loan when the right time arrives as stated in Q 4:58, “God commands you [people] to return the trusts (\textit{al-amānār}) to their rightful owners, and, if you judge between people, to do so with justice: God’s instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything.”

The Qur’an does not provide an answer as to what the nature of the trust is. Muslim thinkers, however, fill in the blanks and connect the notion of the trust with the issue of vicegerency. Annemarie Schimmel summarizes the views which were developed with regard to the connection between the khilāfa and the trust. On the one hand, orthodox Muslims defined the amāna as believing and surrendering to God’s authority. As the Qur’an reiterates human beings tend to be forgetful about this basic call. On the other spectrum we can find the mystics who considered the amāna the secret of love. That love is the seed of creation and is perfected within humankind. In addition, modern Qur’an commentaries define the amāna often as free will or the capacity to be caretakers of the earth. However, humankind not always follows this divine decree.572

For example, in Shah Walī Allāh’s (d. 1175/1762) thought on the concept of khalīfa, human beings represent the peak of creation because of their capacity to make moral decisions. It is certainly true that among the creation it is only humankind that can decide on moral issues and chose the path they want. Wrong and evil choices are therefore also an option for humans.573

Similarly, in the thought of Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1356/1938), the human being with all his faults and shortcomings is the vicegerent of God. After quoting the famous verses on the khalīfa in Q 2:30 and the khulafā’ in Q 6:165, Iqbal makes the connection immediately with the amāna verse of Q 33:72. Here, he states that the human being is the trustee of a free personality

572 Schimmel, “Creation and Judgment in the Koran and in Mystico-Poetical Interpretation,” 157.
which he accepted at his peril.\footnote{Mohammad Iqbal, 
\textit{The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam} (Dubai, UAE: Kitab al-Islamiyyah, n.d.), 95.} According to Iqbal, human beings can become “co-workers” with God if they are willing to take care of the creation. This is how he defines the trust. Human beings in that sense cannot be in a passive state but need to be actively involved in the affairs of the universe. In support of his argument, Iqbal quotes Q 13:11, “God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves, but if He wills harm on a people, no one can ward it off – apart from Him they have no protector.”\footnote{Iqbal, \textit{The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam}, 12. See also Johnston, \textit{Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text}, 325-326.} In another instance, Iqbal defines the trust also as humankind’s capacity of freedom, the choice of doing good or evil.

Human beings in accepting the \textit{amāna} have accepted the “self-hood” or the “trust of personality” as he terms it. It is the “ego,” the trust of “individuality” they accepted – an entity that is capable to lead a human being into self-destruction or on an elevated path and it was because of the former aspect that the heavens and the earth refrained from carrying it.\footnote{Iqbal, \textit{The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam}, 88.}

Nursi follows a similar line like Iqbal and others who have defined the \textit{amāna} as the capacity of free will. Human beings as vicegerents of God are not only endowed with knowledge of all of God’s names, but also with free will. If they use this knowledge of the names wisely and serve and glorify God by their free choice, they rise above the angels and fulfil their destiny as the jewel in the crown of creation \textit{(aḥsan al-taqwīm)}. However, if humanity abuses this knowledge of the names and fails to fulfil its part of the “trust,” it sinks to a position described
by the Qur’an as the “lowest of the low” (asfala sāfilīn) as noted earlier when discussing chapter 95 in the Qur’an.

In his assessment of the trust, Nursi gives central importance to the human ego or anā, the “I” as he calls it. Whether human beings bear the trust faithfully or break their promise is related to how they understand and utilize the element of the “ego” – the most important aspect of their creational make up. The ego enables people to distinguish themselves from other creatures. But there is more. For Nursi, the key to the world is in the hand of every human being and is attached to the self. He states, that from the outside, the doors of the universe are closed to humans. However,

God Almighty has given to the human being by way of a Trust, such a key, called the ‘I’, that it opens all the doors of the world; He has given him an enigmatic ‘I’ with which he may discover the hidden treasures of the Creator of the universe. But the ‘I’ is also an extremely complicated riddle and a talisman that is difficult to solve. When its true nature and the purpose of its creation are known, as it is itself solved, so will be the universe.577

If the “I” or ego is the key to unlock the universe, humanity as a microcosm and a “mirror” of the divine attributes has the potential to establish a strong relationship with the entire creation – the macrocosm. It therefore depends on every individual how to cultivate the “ego” so that its full capacity comes to fruition. One can therefore create strong relationships in every environment and be able to find a place in every context. Furthermore, the ego as the key of the universe shows once more that humanity is not simply bound to one locality or territory. There is more to

577 Nursi, Sözler, 725.
human nature which is as wide and expansive as the universe. These explanations therefore defy limited territorial or special notions of identity.

In sum, for many Muslim theologians the trust characterizes all capacities and skills humanity was give by God. It also signifies that human life including wealth and family is a loan from God which calls for a responsible treatment. It is through the knowledge of the divine names that human beings are able to live up to the trust. All they have been given needs to be returned in the best way to God at the end of their times. Only He can claim ownership of these blessings. As the Qur’an often explains, many people simply do not want to follow the path of revelation and abuse the trust. They are ignorant in that that they do not understand that only God has the moral right to decide how these blessings should be used. Those people deny that God has assigned them the duty of vicegerency. According to Chittick and Murata, such individuals fall into arrogance by assigning power and authority to themselves, “They do not treat the divine attributes that they received from God as a trust. On the contrary, they act as if the attributes belong to themselves and can be used in any way they see fit.”

The above treatment has shown that the objectives mentioned in the beginning of this section can be detected within the interpretive community and can serve therefore in furthering an Islamic theology of migration. To begin with, the principle of the fundamental dignity of human life is further uphold in this section of the creation narrative by being taught the divine names. Humanity is not simply taught the divine attributes but also endowed through them with a huge capacity to perform important tasks in the creation. Being a vicegerent of God is intimately

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connected to the special creational makeup of human beings who are mirrors of the divine
attributes. They are not only called by way of their free choice to live in accordance and
conformity with the divine names but to actively display them in the universe. As such, personal
feelings of inferiority and a lack of self-esteem are entirely rejected by these Qur’anic passages.
A degradation, devaluing of human life or setting up categories of “benefit” or “burden” for
migrants are again dismissed by Qur’anic standards.

God teaching and bestowing on humankind the blessings of knowledge, languages and
the gifts of naming demonstrates that these divine bounties need to be valued in the highest
degree. By teaching Adam and his descendants the names, God has given a share of His freedom
and power to humankind. To know the names, means to know the reality of things, how to
manipulate, control or make use of them. Therefore, an intellectual environment in which the
human being can flourish and develop needs to be cultivated.

On the other hand, the endowment of human beings with the trust and being able to
reflect the divine names, makes evident that every human being can contribute to the community
in the most profound way. Moreover, since the microcosm – the human being – and the
macrocosm – the universe – share this sacred connection of being limited manifestations of the
divine names, they are closely related. It is up to the human being to maintain these relationships
and not allow to be reduced to a spatial or territorial identity. Such an understanding helps to
transcend imaginary constructed boundaries.
4.5 The Divine Command to Bow Down and Iblīs’ Refusal

When We told the angels, ‘Bow down (asjudū) before Adam,’ they all bowed. But not Iblīs, who refused and was arrogant (istakbara): he was disobedient (Q 2:34)

We created you, We gave you shape, and then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down (asjudū) before Adam,’ and they did. But not Iblīs: he was not one of those who bowed down. God said, ‘What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded you?’ and he said, ‘I am better than him (ana khayrun minhu): You created me from fire and him from clay.’ God said, ‘Get out! You are contemptible!’ but Iblīs said, ‘Give me respite until the Day people are raised from the dead,’ and God replied, ‘You have respite.’ And then Iblīs said, ‘Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lie in wait for them all on Your straight path (ṣirāṭaka al-mustaqīm): I will come at them – from their front and their back, from their right and their left – and You will find that most of them are ungrateful.’ God said, ‘Get out! You are disgraced and banished! I swear I shall fill Hell with you and all who follow you!’

(Q 7:11-18)

‘When I have fashioned him and breathed My Spirit into him, bow down before him,’ and the angels all did so. But not Iblīs: he refused to bow down like the others. God said, ‘Iblīs, why did you not bow down like the others?’ and he answered, ‘I will not bow to a mortal You created from dried clay, formed from dark mud.’ ‘Get out (fa-akhruj) of here!’ said God. ‘You are an outcast, rejected until the Day of Judgement.’ Iblīs said, ‘My Lord, give me respite until the Day when they are raised from the dead.’ ‘You have respite,’ said God, until the Day of the Appointed Time.’ Iblīs then said to God, ‘Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lure humankind on earth and put them in the wrong, all except Your devoted servants.’ God said, ‘[Devotion] is a straight path to Me: you will have no power over My servants, only over the ones who go astray and follow you. Hell is the promised place for all these, with seven gates, each gate having its allotted share of them. But the righteous will be in Gardens with springs – ‘Enter them in peace and safety!’’ (Q 15:29-46)

When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they all bowed down, but not Iblīs. He retorted, ‘Why should I bow down to someone You have created out of clay?’ and [then] said, ‘You see this being You have honoured (karramta) above me? If You reprieve me until the Day of Resurrection, I will lead all but a few of his descendants by the nose.’ God said, ‘Go away! Hell will be your reward, and the reward of any of them who follow you – an ample reward. Rouse whichever of them you can with your voice, muster your cavalry and infantry against them, share their wealth and their children with them, and make promises to them – Satan promises them nothing but delusion – but you will have no authority over My [true] servants: Your Lord can take care of them well enough.’ (Q 17:61-65)
We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they all bowed down, but not Iblīs: he was one of the jinn and he disobeyed his Lord’s command. Are you [people] going to take him and his offspring as your masters instead of Me, even though they are your enemies? What a bad bargain for the evildoers! (Q 18:50)

When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they did. But Iblīs refused, so We said, ‘Adam, this is your enemy, yours and your wife’s: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable (Q 20:116-117)

‘When I have shaped him and breathed from My Spirit into him, bow down before him.’ The angels all bowed down together, but not Iblīs, who was too proud. He became a rebel. God said, ‘Iblīs, what prevents you from bowing down to the human being I have made with My own hands? Are you too high and mighty?’ Iblīs said, ‘I am better than him: You made me from fire, and him from clay.’ ‘Get out of here! You are rejected: My rejection will follow you till the Day of Judgement!’ but Iblīs said, ‘My Lord, grant me respite until the Day when they are raised from the dead.’ So He said, ‘You have respite till the Appointed Day.’ Iblīs said, ‘I swear by Your might! I will tempt all but Your chosen servants.’ God said, ‘This is the truth – I speak only the truth – I will fill Hell with you and all those that follow you.’ (Q 38:72-85)

As we look into the next sequence of events – the divine command to bow down in front of Adam and Iblīs’ refusal to do so – two main aspects are of particular interest. First, the thread of the fundamental dignity of human life is once again stressed in these accounts through the act of prostration or bowing down (sajda). Second, the exclusionary notion of arrogance (kibr) and superiority as exemplified by Iblīs’ response is highlighted in these narratives and needs consideration when talking about attitudes between migrant and host communities. Often immigrants are labeled as inferior or are excluded by the host society simply because they are newcomers. On the other hand, immigrants who face discrimination by the receiving community can tend to claim that their home culture is superior to the new one. The possibility of romanticizing one’s culture of origin or one’s ethnicity is real and ironically is a response to an
attitude that migrants criticize in the very first place. While they are facing various forms of
discrimination, they can equally fall into the error of discriminating against their host society by
looking down upon them.

Since the previous sections have sufficiently discussed the sacredness and fundamental
dignity of human life, our discussion on this issue here will be brief. The heavenly community is
ordered by God to fall into prostration or bow down in front of Adam who represents all
humanity. The fact that God calls on the purest beings – the angels – to show respect to Adam
and honor him in the highest way reveals quite a lot about humankind’s elevated status in the
sight of God. The angels as a high species of creation have no hesitation to bow down. However,
as many commentators point out, the honor is not directed to Adam per se but to God. To honor
God is to honor Adam by falling into prostration. Adam’s honor and dignity is God-given and
cannot be questioned. It is affirmed by God Himself and finds its fullest expression through the
command to bow down.

According to Lane, the root *s-j-d* denotes the act of humbling or lowering oneself and of
displaying one’s submissiveness. The forehead – the place of pride and intellect – is put on the
ground when going into prostration (*sufūd*). It therefore suggests complete surrender. Further, the
act of bowing down is an expression of salutation, reverence and to pay respect and honor to the
person or to magnify him.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁹ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Book I, 1307.
There are numerous passages in the Qurʾan mentioning the act of prostration. They often appear in connection with the ritual prayer (ṣalāt). The Qurʾan describes how all the creatures in heaven or on earth, as a sign of their devotion to the creator, perform the act of prostration. Even the shadows are being described as being in prostration. It is quite telling that the heavenly council as the purest of creation is prostrating before Adam, whose position is therefore established once again as superior to all other beings. To emphasize, this honor and dignity comes from God alone and is not acquired by Adam. Rather, it is only through the attachment and relationship to the creator who has endowed human beings with the divine attributes that their status is a dignified one.

Various other verses stress the importance that prostration should be directed solely to God and not to the sun or moon as Q 41:37 reads, “The night, the day, the sun, the moon, are only a few of His signs. Do not bow down in worship to the sun or the moon, but bow down to God who created them, if it is truly Him that you worship.” Joseph’s parents and brothers fell down prostrate before him in Egypt as Q 12:100 states: “They all bowed down before him and he

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580 See for instance Q 15:98, “Celebrate the glory of your Lord and be among those who bow down (al-sājidīn) to Him,” Q 25:64, “Those who spend the night bowed down (sujadan) or standing, worshiping their Lord,” Q 76:26, “At night bow down (asjūd) before Him, glorify Him at length by night,” or Q 96:19, “No! Do not obey him. [Prophet]: bow down (asjud) in worship and draw close.”

581 See for example Q 7:206, “[Even] those who live in the presence of your Lord are not too proud (lā yastakbirūna) to worship Him: they glorify Him and bow down (yasjudūna) before Him,” Q 13:15, “All that are in heaven and earth submit (yasjudu) to God alone, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the mornings and in the evenings,” Q 16:48-49, “Do the [disbelievers] not observe the things that God has created, how their shadows move, right and left, submitting (sujjadān) themselves to God obediently? It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth submits (yasjudu), every creature that moves, even the angels. They are free from arrogance (lā yastakbirūna): they fear their Lord above them, and they as they are commanded,” Q 22:18, “Do you not realize that everything in the heavens and earth submits (yasjudu) to God: the sun, the moon and the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the animals? So do many human beings, though for many others torment is due. Anyone disgraced by God will have no one to honour him: God does whatever He will,” Q 55:6, “The plants and the trees submit (yasjudān) to His designs.” See also Roberto Tottoli, “Bowing and Prostration,” in Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān, Vol.1, 255.
said, ‘Father, this is the fulfillment of that dream I had long ago. My Lord has made it come true and has been gracious to me.’” Given the strict Muslim prohibition against prostration to anything other than God, this scene in the Joseph story and the prostration of angels in front of Adam led Muslim exegetes to offer explanations which preserved the uncompromising monotheism of the Qur’an. On the basis of several reports, Ṭabarī for example is quick to assert that the honor is to God when prostrating, not to Adam.582

4.5.1 Arrogance and Pride

It is noteworthy that some of the verses dealing with the act of prostration also explain that those who refuse to perform it often do so out of arrogance or pride just like Iblīs. This should not come as surprise since the creation narratives point out that Iblīs will also have human followers embracing his arrogant and haughty behavior. As Ṭabarī points out, Iblīs’ refusal and arrogance pertains not just to him but to all those who refuse to obey God.583 The pagan Arabs refused to fall into prostration because of their arrogance.584

The term which is used for describing Iblīs’ attitude is istakbara. It is derived from the root k-b-r and designates someone who “magnifies himself, behaves proudly, haughtily or

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582 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al Bayān, Vol.1, 512.
584 See for example Q 25:60, “Yet when they are told, ‘Bow down before the Lord of Mercy,’ they say, ‘What is the Lord of Mercy? Should we bow down before anything you command?’ and they turn even further away,” Q 68:42-43, “On the Day when matters become dire, they will be invited to prostrate themselves but will be prevented from doing so, and their eyes will be downcast and they will be overwhelmed with shame: they were invited to prostrate themselves when they were safe [but refused],” Q 7:206, “[Even] those who live in the presence of your Lord are not too proud to worship Him: they glorify Him and bow down before Him,” Q 16:49, “It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth submits, every creature that moves, even the angels. They are free from arrogance: they fear their Lord above them, and they do as they are commanded,” Q 32:15, “The only people who truly believe in Our messages are those who, when they are reminded of them, bow down in worship, celebrate their Lord’s praises, and do not think themselves above this.” See also Tottoli, “Bowing and Prostration,” 255.
Lane also mentions that it describes someone who “boasts of great qualities which the person does not possess.” Interestingly, istakbara is the most frequent form of the root k-b-r in the Qur’an, appearing forty times.

Sources outside the Qur’anic text provide us with some more detail about the character and origin of Iblīs. Scholarly opinions differed but it was generally agreed that he was a devout believer who was occupied with worshipping God. This is particularly stressed within the Sufi tradition. As a jinn he was raised among the angels and joined them in their devotion to God. Yet, as a believer he is still prone to fall into the sin of kibr (arrogance). He asserts greatness by declaring “I am better than him” and completely ignores the fact that the divine command necessitates showing respect and honor to Adam. He becomes haughty and arrogant and ultimately ends up becoming one of the unbelievers (al-kāfirūn). Iblīs is not only alienated from God through his disobedience and arrogance but also from the rest of creation by setting up boundaries and excessively focusing on differences.

If we take a closer look into the narratives, the reason for Iblīs’ disobedience is clearly laid out. Adam is being described as created from stinking, decayed mud. As Bodman observes, such material is regarded by Iblīs as inferior and gives him enough legitimacy to refuse God’s order to prostrate in front of the new human being. Iblīs uses his own logic and concludes that in comparison to Adam he stands higher in the creation. It should be Adam who should show reverence to Iblīs who was created out of fire – a superior element than clay as he wrongly

585 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I, 2585.
586 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I, 2585.
587 k-b-r,” in Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage.
believes. To his limited mind, God’s order does not suit well with his own sense of justice. But as we have seen from God’s response, it is not up to God’s creation to question His decisions. God’s orders cannot be evaluated by creational standards or measures like finite reason.\textsuperscript{589}

As Bodman points out, we have seen a similar scenario take place with the angels who were also puzzled about why God intended to create a being which will cause mischief and corruption on earth. In a similar vein, God does not refute the argument but stresses that there is some knowledge the angels do not possess and that human beings’ goodness far outweighs their evil.\textsuperscript{590} As we have observed, Qur’an commentators generally interpreted the divine statement of “I know what you do not” in that way. As was the case in that account, God affirms that there will be human beings deciding to follow Iblīs’ path and become his followers. However, both God and Iblīs state that he will not have any influence or power over God’s sincere servants, who will resist Iblīs’ temptations. In this sense, the dual nature of human beings is once again confirmed: some of them will embrace the path of arrogance and disbelief, but the sincere ones will not neglect God’s guidance but will hold on to the straight path.

As it is obvious from Iblīs’ response on why he refuses to bow down in front of Adam, he uses his own intellectual capacity to make an analogy. This has been termed \textit{qiyās} – analogical reasoning – in the Islamic tradition. As Bodman notes, within Islamic scholarship the status of \textit{qiyās} was a matter of debate. The well-known jurist Imam Shāfi‘ī and many others along with

\textsuperscript{589} Bodman, \textit{The Poetics of Iblīs}, 24.
\textsuperscript{590} Bodman, \textit{The Poetics of Iblīs}, 25.
him favored the application of *qiyyās* in the field of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).\(^{591}\) It was generally understood that *qiyyās* needs to be in conformity with the major authoritative sources of Islam – Qur’an and *sunna*. In the exegetical tradition, there is wide condemnation of Iblīs’ use of his own reasoning.\(^{592}\) Ṭabarī mentions reports which point out that Iblīs’ attitude in contesting God’s command by employing his own intellect was a major mistake.\(^{593}\) Iblīs asserts that he is greater than Adam who was created from inferior elements. Further, Iblīs was created before Adam – he was the first in place. That the greater has to bow down in front of the lesser is simply unacceptable for him. God’s reaction shows that He is unappreciative of Iblīs’ behavior. Moreover, His condemnation exemplifies that reason and logic can be even deceptive to determine faithfulness and importance in the sight of God. Nevertheless, Iblīs will continue to strive to prove human corruption, unreliability and failures. However, Iblīs is not able to change God’s mind and the divine regard for humanity is unchanged despite all the rational reasons to neglect this human being. In that we see once again the fundamental dignity of human life unshattered and preserved.

The Qur’an is adamant that it is only God who can claim greatness and one of the divine attributes often mentioned in scripture is *al-kabīr* (“The Great”). It also occurs in association with the divine attribute *al-ʿalī* (“The Supreme”).\(^{594}\) Since human beings as creatures of God are

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\(^{592}\) Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 25.


\(^{594}\) See for instance Q 4:34, “God is most high and great,” Q 22:62, “So it will be, because it is God alone who is the Truth, and whatever else they invoke is sheer falsehood: it is God who is the Most High, the Most Great,” Q 31:30, “This is because God is the Truth, and what they invoke beside Him is false. He is the Most High, Most Great,” Q 34:23, “Intercession will not work with Him, except by those to whom He gives permission. They will be asked,
only mirrors and manifestations of the divine attributes, as explained earlier in the discussion of the divine names, they cannot claim any ownership of these qualities. As Nasr Abu Zayd states, people who claim that all authority, power and divine qualities belong to them are falling into *shirk* which is considered a major crime and sin in the Islamic tradition. Only God is the absolute owner of everything in the universe including human beings and their faculties. If individuals declare themselves to be independent from God and self-sufficient they have associated themselves with God and fallen into *shirk*. Such attitudes are futile since no one can compete with God’s sovereignty and power.

People who look down on others and consider themselves to be on a higher rank than others are simply arrogant. Following Iblīs logic by adopting an exclusionary attitude, the person fails to see the sacred ties and bonds between all creations. God is the creator of everyone and everything. Instead of obsessively focusing on difference as Iblīs does by looking at the clay, the believer is called to maintain the sacred links and acknowledge the interconnectedness of the universe. The myth of independence and self-sufficiency is quickly dispelled if one’s individual life is examined in detail. How many people are needed to build a personal home or produce clothing? A well-known *ḥadīth* of Muhammad collected by Tirmidhī reads, “Whoever has a

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after the terror is lifted from their hearts [on the Day of Judgement], ‘What did your Lord speak?’ and they will answer, ‘The Truth. He is the Most High, the Most Great,’” Q 40:12, “[They will be told], ‘This is all because when God alone was invoked you rejected this, yet when others were associated with Him you believed [in them].’ Judgement belongs to God the Most High, the Most Great.”

mustard seed’s weight of arrogance (kibr) in his heart, shall not be admitted into Paradise. And whoever has a mustard seed’s weight of faith in his heart, shall not be admitted into the Fire.”

As Nasr Abu Zayd observes, the Qur’an provides many stories about various communities and persons who insist out of pride and arrogance on not following divine guidance like Iblīs. The polytheists in Mecca, the people of Midian, Noah’s community, the people of ‘Ād and the followers of Pharaoh – all can be described as representatives of arrogance and pride. Those who are characterized as arrogant usually do not acknowledge God’s signs in the universe, they do not respect the rights of other beings, they do not live up to the requirements of being God’s servant and simply do not embrace the revelation. Arrogant individuals do not heed the call of the Qur’an and do not embrace a faith in the hereafter. Their ultimate residence will be hell.

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598 Nasr Abu Zayd, “Arrogance,” 161. See for example Q 7:88, “His people’s arrogant leaders said, ‘Shu‘ayb, we will expel you and your fellow believers from our town unless you return to our religion.’ He said, ‘What! Even if we detest it?’” Q 41:15, “The people of ’Ād behaved arrogantly throughout the land without any right, saying, ‘Who could be stronger than us?’ Did they not realize that God, who created them, was stronger than them?” Q 71:7, “Every time I call them, so that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers into their ears, cover their heads with their garments, persist in their rejection, and grow more insolent and arrogant.”
599 Nasr Abu Zayd, “Arrogance,” 161. See for instance Q 4:172, “The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, nor would the angels who are close to Him. He will gather before Him all those who disdain His worship and are arrogant,” Q 7:146, “I will keep distracted from My signs those who behave arrogantly on Earth without any right, and who, even if they see every sign, will not believe in them; they will not take the way of right guidance if they see it, but will take the way of error if they see that. This is because they denied Our signs and paid them no heed,” Q 40:35, “Those who dispute God’s messages, with no authority given to them, are doing something that is loathed by God and by those who believe. In this way God seals up the heart of every arrogant tyrant.”
600 Nasr Abu Zayd, “Arrogance,” 161. See for example Q 16:22, “Your God is the One God. As for those who deny the life to come, their hearts refuse to admit the truth and they are arrogant,” Q 16:29, “So enter the gates of Hell. There you will remain – the home of the arrogant is evil indeed,” Q 39:60, “On the Day of Resurrection, you [Prophet] will see those who told lies against God, their faces darkened. Is there no home for the arrogant in Hell?” Q 39:72, “It will be said, ‘Enter the gates of Hell: there you will remain. How evil is the abode of the arrogant!’” Q 40:76, “Enter the gates of Hell, there to remain – an evil home for the arrogant,” Q 45:8, “Who hears God’s
Nasr Abu Zayd explains that in the case of God, “understood as the creator of the whole universe and the supreme authority on heaven and earth, arrogance is devoid of such negative meanings. As a divine attribute al-mutakabbir means that he exalts himself over doing injustice to His creation, or that He transcends the characteristics of his creation.”

Anything good that individuals own belongs to God alone. He is the one who shared His power and knowledge with humankind and any success in life is only due to Him. The trust (amâna) is everything what people have and what they owe to God alone. No one can assign greatness to themselves because all praise is only due to God. This is also echoed in the following Qur’anic passage declaring that all blessings are bestowed upon the human being by God through His grace, but humankind arrogantly assigns this goodness to itself, “Whenever We are gracious to the human being, he goes away haughtily, but, as soon as harm touches him, he turns to prolonged prayer” (Q 41:51).

As Shaykh Tosun Bayrak explains further, one can only achieve to be a mirror of al-mutakabbir when refraining from claiming any greatness after having gained success. Those people who make use of their highest potential and turn to be successful yet remain humble are the ones which then fully reflect this divine attribute.

Hence, humility becomes a key virtue. By remembering and knowing the divine quality of al-mutakabbir believers are also protected from being ridiculed by the rest of creation. Those servants of God know that their Lord in His greatness will preserve their dignity and worth.

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603 Al-Halveti, The Name & The Named, 63.
embodiment of humility is expected to be a key component of good character. As Nasr Abu Zayd explains, those Muslims who do not claim any greatness but rather embrace a humble attitude are called by the Qur’anic title “servants of God most gracious” (‘ibād al-raḥmān).\textsuperscript{604} Q 25:63 states that, “The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly (hawnan) on the earth, and who, when aggressive people address them reply, with words of peace.” Luqman’s advice to his son echoes this statement, “Do not turn your nose up at people, nor walk about the place arrogantly, for God does not love arrogant or boastful people” (Q 31:18). Further, Q 4:172-173 reads that

He will gather before Him all those who disdain His worship and are arrogant: to those who believe and do good works He will give due rewards and more from His bounty; to those who are disdainful and arrogant He will give an agonizing torment, and they will find no one besides God to protect or help them.

As Nasr Abu Zayd rightly points out, those who insist on arrogant behavior are behaving in unjust ways towards God and their own selves as Q 6:93 maintains,

> Who could be more wicked than someone who invents a lie against God, or claims, ‘A revelation has come to me,’ when no revelation has been sent to him, or says, ‘I too can reveal something equal to God’s revelation?’ If you [Prophet] could only see the wicked in their death agonies, as the angels stretch out their hands [to them], saying, ‘Let out your souls. Today you will be repaid with a humiliating punishment for saying false things about God and for arrogantly rejecting His revelations.’

Arrogance can be also a reason to commit crimes against other people. The Qur’an describes the mustaḍ’afūn (“those regarded as weak”) as a group of people who are subjugated by the arrogant (mustakbirūn) as Q 7:75 points out, “But the arrogant leaders among his people said to the

\textsuperscript{604} Nasr Abu Zayd, “Arrogance,” 161.
believers they thought to be of no account, ‘Do you honestly think that Salih is a messenger from his Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes. We believe in the message sent through him,’ but the arrogant leaders said, ‘We reject what you believe in.’” The Qur’an calls on all Muslims to stand up for the weak, “Why should you not fight in God’s cause and for those oppressed men, women, and children who cry out, ‘Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! By Your grace, give us a protector and give us a helper!’” (Q 4:75).

The offense of non-prostration is not an offense against the object of prostration, the human, but against the creator of that human, against God. God made the human being with His own hands. People who refuse to embrace another person, actually commit a crime against God. They dismiss the sanctity of human life and prefer to listen to their own egotistic standards of hierarchy and superiority. Following Iblīsi logic, they rely on their own rational assumptions and criteria in categorizing who is more valuable and worthy of respect and honor. These accounts completely reject such an attitude. Human notions of deficiency or value have no say in the grand divine scheme. To question God’s decrees is to question His divinity and wisdom. It is an outright insult and transgression against God. It is quite common within the immigration discourse to create certain categories and superficial labels in order to assign people different ranks. These are mere human constructs which not only alienate people from one another but also alienate the human being from God. The Qur’an focuses on the foundational dignity of human life and demonstrates that human beings inherently possess value and worth in the sight of God. It is then for humans to ask how to uphold, maintain and preserve such dignity.

In these narratives we have seen that the root cause of devaluing other human beings is mere arrogance and the claim of superiority. It is the illusion that one stands higher in the creational hierarchy than others. Whereas the Qur’an clearly shows that human beings are equal in the sight of God and it is only God-consciousness and faith which distinguishes them, people set up more boundaries and establish walls of differences. As evident through Iblīs, religious people are not immune from such exclusionary attitudes. Instead of seeing faith as a means to increase one’s humility towards God and others, it can be used in personally and socially destructive ways. It is personally destructive because it alienates the believer from God and claims ownership of the goodness and virtues bestowed on the human being by God Himself. It is to plagiarize the divine attributes and regard oneself in a delusional way as the source of goodness and perfection. This is of course a violation against God’s wisdom of creation and alienates the person from the creator. Arrogance is socially destructive because it focuses excessively on differences instead of on the common ties. To be clear, the Qur’an acknowledges differences of tribe, race, color and language. These are again God-willed and as scripture points out, they are for people to “know one another not to despise one another.” This verse basically states that there is a danger of taking them as markers of inferiority or superiority. Excessive emphasis on difference then leads to the alienation of individuals and groups from one another. It is to fail to see the common human interests and basic needs for which all long for such as physical, spiritual/religious or intellectual ones and social nourishment and progress.

Arrogance is despised as a vice, whereas humility as a virtue is loved by God. As the Qur’an over and over reiterates humility manifests itself in seeing others as close to oneself and
not any different. Moreover, the truly faithful prefer others over themselves. True faith acknowledges the sacred bonds in the creation and makes an effort to maintain those instead of severing them by setting up artificial boundaries and creating unnecessary social and legal constructs. Unfortunately, such arrogance is individually and collectively manifested on many levels in today’s societies. It is the root cause of many injustices – be they legal, social or cultural.

4.6   Dwelling in the Garden and Eating from the Forbidden Tree

We said, ‘Adam, live (uskun) with your wife (zawjuka) in this garden. Both of you eat (kulā) freely (raghadan) there as you will, but do not go near (lā taqrabā) this tree (al-shajara), or you will both become wrongdoers (al-zālimīn).’ But Satan made them slip (azallahumā), and removed them (fa-akhrajahumā) from the state they were in (Q 2:35-36)

‘But you and your wife, Adam, live (uskun) in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like (fa-kulā min ḥaythu shiʾ tumā), but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers.’ Satan whispered to them so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them: he said, ‘Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels (malakayn) or immortals (al-khālidīn),’ and he swore to them, ‘I am giving you sincere advice’ – he lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the Garden to cover themselves. Their Lord called to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’ (Q 7:19-22)

In the garden you will never go hungry, feel naked, be thirsty, or suffer the heat of the sun.’ But Satan whispered to Adam, saying, ‘Adam, shall I show you the tree of immortality (shajara al-khulūd) and power (mulk) that never decays (lā yablā)?’ and they both ate (akalā) from it. They became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden. Adam disobeyed His Lord and was led astray (Q 20:118-121)

In moving to the next sequence of events – the dwelling in the garden and eating from the forbidden tree – two main aspects for an Islamic theology of migration are of interest. What
stands out first and foremost, is the notion of radical hospitality expressed through God’s divine invitation to reside in the heavenly garden – the most comfortable and beautiful location which also offers His all-encompassing provision to humankind. As we will see in the later segment of the descent to earth such divine hospitality and care is also provided for the temporary settlement of humans in the terrestrial world. Needless to say that hospitality as a major virtue is central in the treatment of newcomers and is therefore essential for any discussion on immigration. Looking at the creation narratives provides clues on what an Islamic understanding of hospitality might look like.

Of second interest is the human longing for eternity as indicated by the description of the tree as being the tree of immortality and power (shajara al-khuld wa’il mulk) which never decays (lā yablā). We are not offered any more details by the Qur’an on the nature of the tree. All what we have is Satan’s characterization of it. Adam and Eve are drawn to the tree which God has prohibited to them in the first place.

### 4.6.1 Radical Hospitality

To begin with the notion of radical hospitality, God Himself directly addresses Adam and his wife to settle and live in the heavenly garden – the realm of utmost comfort and pleasure. Their relationship is affirmed and maintained as being a family. There is no separation of them – their relational character is preserved. Even in heaven Adam and his wife need each other as loving companions finding tranquility within each other. Otherwise full enjoyment cannot be warranted. God tells them both to eat and enjoy everything without limit and freely (raghadan) with the one exception of the tree of course. As the accounts above say, the heavenly garden as a
place of comfort and safety will never make them feel hungry, thirsty or vulnerable through the exposure to heat or their nakedness. God promises to secure all human needs – He provides food, drink and most importantly shelter. Clothing is not explicitly mentioned in this particular account and appears later when talking about the earthly realm. Nevertheless, God assures them that they will not feel any nakedness. The great care, compassion, mercy and love is expressed through these statements. And because human beings have endless needs and desires due to their comprehensive nature, God does not set up any limits to that enjoyment which is particularly reiterated in qur’anic verses dealing with the state in paradise. God’s radical hospitality, His blessings and bounties are displayed not only in the earthly, physical cosmos as will be outlined later but also in the heavenly garden – the ultimate enjoyment and bliss.

As Leah Kinberg points out, in the Qur’an the hereafter or paradisal state is described as an eternal, physical abode and its residents as we have just seen through the above verses are portrayed as living, sensible human beings who continue to have physical desires such as food, drink, shelter and sexual satisfaction. The passage in Q 56:17-24 demonstrates that only too well, “Everlasting youths will go round among them with glasses, flagons, and cups of a pure drink that causes no headache or intoxication; [there will be] any fruit they choose; the meat of any bird they like; and beautiful-eyed maidens like hidden pearls: reward for what they used to do.” Q 56:27-40 continues in the same vein,

Those on the Right, what people they are! They will dwell amid thornless lote trees and clustered acacia with spreading shade, constantly flowing water, abundant fruits, unfailing, unforbidden, with incomparable companions We have

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specially created – virginal, loving, of matching age – for those on the Right, many from the past and many from later generations.”

As evident, the accounts in the Qur’an on paradise use very worldly concepts and once more reiterate the interconnectedness and close relationship between the heavenly and earthly realm as alluded in the very beginning of this study. The needs of human beings in the heavenly realm are no different from the ones they have living on the earthly terrain. This interconnection can be demonstrated through the term *janna* which is the most commonly used word denoting paradise. It appears in the Qur’an with reference to the primordial garden, the dwelling place of Adam as read in Q 2:35, “We said, ‘Adam, live with your wife in this garden (*al-janna*).’” It is also used for describing a worldly garden as stated in Q 2:264-265, “But those who spend their wealth in order to gain God’s approval, and as an affirmation of their own faith, are like a garden (*janna*) on a hill.”607 Another passages makes this interconnection of heaven and earth more evident,

[Prophet], give those who believe and do good the news that they will have Gardens graced with flowing streams. Whenever they are given sustenance from the fruits of these Gardens they will say, ‘We have been given this before,’ because they were provided with something like it. They will have pure spouses and there they will stay (Q 2:25).

However, paradise in fact provides a broader, more intense and purer experience of these different human desires without any negative side effects. Heavenly delights and pleasures still exceed worldly ones and cannot be described by any earthly or human experience as the Qur’an conveys for instance in Q 32:17, “No soul knows what joy is kept hidden in store for them as a

reward for what they have done.” The Qur’an enumerates so many different rewards awaiting the faithful in the celestial realm. Q 76:11-22 offers a very picturesque and detailed description,

So God will save them from the woes of that Day, give them radiance and gladness, and reward them, for their steadfastness, with a Garden and silk [robes]. They will sit on couches, feeling neither scorching heat nor biting cold, with shady [branches] spread above them and clusters of fruit hanging close at hand. They will be served with silver plates and gleaming silver giblets according to their fancy and they will be given a drink infused with ginger from a spring called Salsabil. Everlasting youths will attend them – if you could see them, you would think they were scattered pearls – if you looked around you would see bliss and great opulence: they will wear garments of green silk and brocade; they will be adorned with silver bracelets; their Lord will give them a pure drink: ‘This is your reward. Your endeavours are appreciated.’

References to these different rewards and sensual delights such as fruits and numerous other provisions, vessels of gold, silver or crystal, extraordinary garments made out of silk and brocade, wine that does not intoxicate, pleasant weather, shade and palaces abound in the Qur’an and are far too many to cite. It can be therefore summed up in following Qur’anic terms, “Dishes and goblets of gold will be passed around them with all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in. ‘There you will remain’” (Q 43:71). Or as Q 50:34-35 conveys, “So enter it in peace. This is the Day of everlasting Life.’ They will have all that they wish for there, and We have more for them.” As Kinberg rightly states, such sensual pleasures in paradise have often been taken in non-Muslim circles as a reason for polemics and criticizing Islam for being too worldly. The Qur’an however depicts a very realistic and humane portrayal of the essential desires and wishes of humanity and does not do away with those by offering sole spiritual

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pleasures. Instead, it holds both of these rewards – spiritual and sensual – as equally important. Spiritual delights in paradise are named in the Qur’an as receiving the pleasure of God or seeing His face.\textsuperscript{610}

The Islamic tradition makes clear that God is bestowing these blessings on humankind out of His grace and mercy and that humankind can never really claim that they have truly earned these due to their worship on earth which remains limited compared to God’s infinite favors. Rather, these rewards are an expression of God’s limitless generosity and love towards humanity. God’s radical hospitality in the celestial realm does take into consideration the physical and spiritual needs of human beings. It is a holistic approach in nurturing and caring for people.

Human beings who are considered to be mirrors of the divine attributes are therefore called to emulate these divine attitudes in their own lives. God’s qualities inform humankind about their moral and ethical duties which is to care for the whole person and the diverse needs and desires. God’s treatment of creation provides therefore a framework of how to operate when hosting an individual. It comes therefore as no surprise that the Islamic tradition always gave much importance to how to treat a guest and that hospitality is so deeply rooted in Muslim culture. Those believers who have truly internalized who God is and how He interacts with His creation will make a sincere effort to honor God by displaying these qualities in their own lives. They will strive to treat every human being with deep care and compassion. Some migrants say that they have no complaints about the host society taking care of their physical and material

\textsuperscript{610}Kinberg, “Paradise,” 18.
needs. They lament however that their emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs are not being satisfied sufficiently or that they are denied access to nourish those. Radical hospitality within this Qur’anic framework calls for a rounded treatment of this predicament.

If some migrants have serious mental and psychological issues simply because they are denied to be united with their family, cannot practice their religion, face discrimination in the educational system, the job market or in society, then such radical hospitality as modeled by divine example is simply lacking at best or absent at worst. In laying out the ideal of hospitality in the extra-terrestrial realm, the Qur’an is providing a guideline on what is important for true human happiness and genuine pleasure. While human beings will probably not achieve the ultimate fulfilment of all of these standards simply because it is paradisal, they can nevertheless take these markers as showing them the way for what is important for human flourishing.

In turning to the second element of this particular account – the tree of eternity and power (shajara al-khuld wa’l mulk) – following observations can be made. The reader does not receive any information from the divine side on the nature of this tree. All we have is the statement provided by Iblīs who tempts Adam and his wife to eat from the tree so that they become immortals and angel-like, “He said, ‘Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels (malakayn) or immortals (al-kháliḍín),’ and he swore to them, ‘I am giving you sincere advice’ – he lured them with lies” (Q 7:20-22). It is a tree which never decays (lā yablá). Adam and his wife – and by extension all humanity – obviously long for eternal life and enjoyment after being exposed to all the pleasures in paradise. The yearning for eternity is
inherent to their nature. In order to keep their state of bliss they follow Iblīs’ advice. Satan promises them an eternal kingdom.

The aspect of eternity as discussed in the Qur’an is worthwhile to explore for our purposes. The Qur’an is quite clear that God is the only eternal being (al-bāqī) as His divine names – al-awwal wa-l-ākhir (the First and the last) in Q 57:3 – convey. As chapter 112 in the Qur’an affirms, God was not begotten. Human beings can attain an eternal state only in the afterlife. Depending on their human actions on earth, the Qur’an promises either eternal reward or punishment in the afterlife. The root kh-l-d as it appears in the “tree of eternity” (shajara al-khulūd) is also used in the Qur’an for the day of eternity in Q 50:34, “So enter it in peace. This is the Day of everlasting Life (yawm al-khulūd).” The devout believers will enjoy the celestial delights in the garden of eternity as Q 25:15 states, “Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden (jannat al-khulūd) that those who are mindful of God have been promised as their reward and journey’s end?’” Q 13:35 also proclaims that they will enjoy paradise’s eternal (dā’im) fruit and shade, “Here is a picture of the Garden that those mindful of God have been promised: flowing streams and perpetual food (ukuluhā dā’ iman) and shade. This is the reward that awaits those who are mindful of God.” In unambiguous ways scripture promises that the righteous will dwell in there for eternity with their spouses. The Qur’an also employs the term dār al-ākhira

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613 Bashir, “Eternity,” 55.
614 See for instance Q 4:122, “But We shall admit those who believe and do good deeds into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever – a true promise from God. Who speaks more truly than God?” Q 5:119, “God will say, ‘This is a Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness. They will have Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever. God is pleased with them and they with Him: that is the supreme triumph,’” Q 9:22, “And where they will remain for ever: truly, there is a tremendous reward with God,” Q 9:100,
(“abode of the hereafter”) mostly in contrast with the present world (al-dunyā). Q 40:39, for example highlights the transitory nature of this world with the everlasting presence in the hereafter, “My people, the life of this world is only a brief enjoyment; it is the Hereafter that is the lasting home (dār al-qarār).”

In reiterating that it is only in the hereafter that human beings will find eternal happiness and ultimately settle, the Qur’an alerts the believer not to channel this yearning on to the worldly realm. Earthly life is ephemeral, transitory, vanishing and finite and can therefore by its very nature not satisfy the human need for eternity. However, human beings seem to fall into forgetfulness that they cannot fully settle in this world since they will be always on a journey to God.

4.7 Descent to Earth and Return to the Heavenly Home

But Satan made them slip, and removed them from the state they were in. We said, ‘Get out (ahbiṭū), all of you! You are each other’s enemy. On earth (al-ard) you will have a place to stay (mustaqqaran) and livelihood (matā’un) for a time (ilā ḫīn).’ Then Adam received some words (kalimātin) from his Lord and He accepted his repentance: he is the Ever Relenting’, the Most Merciful. We said, ‘Get out (ahbiṭū), all of you (jamī’an)! But when guidance (hudān) comes from Me, as it certainly will, there will be no fear for those who follow My guidance (hudāya) nor will they grieve – those who disbelieve and deny Our messages shall be the inhabitants of the Fire and there they will remain.’ (Q 2:36-39)

“God will be pleased with the first emigrants and helpers and those who followed them in good deeds, and they will be well pleased with Him: He has prepared Gardens graced with flowing streams for them, there to remain for ever. That is the supreme triumph,” Q 18:2-3, “And giving glad news to the believers who do good deeds – an excellent reward that they will always enjoy,” Q 64:9, “When He gathers you for the Day of Gathering, the Day of mutual neglect, He will cancel the sins of those who believed in Him and acted rightly: He will admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever – the supreme triumph,” Q 65:11, “God will admit those who believe in Him and do righteous deeds into Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will remain for ever – He has made good provision for them,” Q 98:8, “Their reward with their Lord is everlasting Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will stay forever. God is well pleased with them and they with Him. All this is for those who stand in awe of their Lord,” Q 4:57, “As for those who believe and do good deeds, We shall admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams and there they will remain forever. They will have pure spouses there, and We shall admit them into cool refreshing shade.”

615 Kinberg, “Paradise,” 15.
They replied, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if You do not forgive us and have mercy, we shall be lost.’ He said, ‘All of you get out (ahbiṭū)! You are each other’s enemies. On earth you will have a place to stay and livelihood – for a time (fī-l arḍi mustagarrun wa matā un ilā ḥīn).’ He said, ‘There you will live (tahyawna); there you will die (tamūtūna); from there you will be brought out (tukhrajūna).’ (Q 7:23-25)

But Satan whispered to Adam, saying, ‘Adam, shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that never decays?’ and they both ate from it. They became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden. Adam disobeyed His Lord and was led astray – later his Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance, and guided him – God said, ‘Get out (ahbiṭā) of the garden as each other’s enemy.’ Whoever follows My guidance (hudāya), when it comes to you, will not go astray nor fall into misery, but whoever turns away from it will have a life of great hardship. We shall bring him blind to the Assembly on the Day of Resurrection and he will say, ‘Lord, why did You bring me here blind? I was sighted before!’ God will say, ‘This is how it is: You ignored Our revelations when they came to you, so today you will be ignored.’ (Q 20:120-126)

As we continue to examine the next series of events – the descent to earth – two features catch our attention. First, the notion of radical hospitality appears once again with the divine announcement that God will provide for humankind also during their earthly time. In relation to that, we will also explore the possible ramifications on the distribution of resources and wealth which are all bestowed on humanity by God alone. Needless to say that the dispute over resources and wealth features prominently in the public migration discourse. The question whether immigrants should be allowed to enter a country because of a possible exploitation of precious economic resources needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, the duration in the worldly realm, as the Qur’an time and again proclaims, is only temporary. It is this second aspect of the ultimate return to one’s celestial origin that we will also analyze in some more depth. This eschatological dimension is significant as it
underlines the migrant identity of every human being. Humanity is migrant in nature and will eventually return to its original home. The Qur’an in its numerous references to the resurrection and afterlife is unambiguous about this.

In focusing first on the notion of radical hospitality which already came up in the previous section on the celestial life, we see that earthly life is mirroring many of these generous and compassionate attributes of God. As Peterson observes, the Qur’an makes clear that this world was created for the benefit and use of human beings. It is a place where they can not only flourish but also where their human needs and wants are satisfied. The nature of the world also expresses God’s vast generosity and mercy. Q 2:21-22 is a case in point, “People, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may be mindful [of Him] who spread out the earth for you and built the sky; who sent water down from it and with that water produced things for your sustenance. Do not, knowing this, set up rivals to God.”

616 Peterson, “Creation,” 473.
617 For more examples see Q 2:22, “Who spread out the earth for you and built the sky; who sent water down from it and with that water produced things for your sustenance,” Q 2:29, “It was He who created all that is on the earth for you, then turned to the sky and made the seven heavens: it is He who has knowledge of all things,” Q 10:67, “It is He who made the night so that you can rest in it and the daylight so that you can see – there truly are signs in this for those who hear,” Q 14:32-34, “It is God who created the heavens and earth, who has sent down water from the sky and with it brought forth produce to nourish you; He has made ships useful to you, sailing the sea by His command, and the rivers too; He has made the sun and the moon useful to you, steady on their paths; He has made the night and day useful to you and given you some of everything you asked Him for. If you tried to count God’s favours you could never calculate them: the human being is truly unjust and ungrateful,” Q 16:5-8, “And livestock – He created them too. You derive warmth and other benefits from them: you get food from them; you find beauty in them when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them out to pasture. They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship – truly your Lord is kind and merciful – horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and use for show, and other things you know nothing about,” Q16:10-18, “It is He who sends down water for you from the sky, from which comes a drink for you, and the shrubs that you feed to your animals. With it He grows for you grain, olives, palms, vines, and all kinds of other crops. There truly is a sign in this for those who reflect. By His command He has made the night and day, the sun, moon, and stars all of benefit to you. There truly are signs in this for those who use their reason. He has made of benefit to you the many-coloured things He has multiplied on the earth. There truly are signs in this for those who take it to heart. It is He who made the sea of benefit to you: you eat fresh fish from it and bring out jewellery to wear; you see the ships cutting through
chapter 55 of the Qur’an reminds its readers that human beings will never be fully able to recount all divine blessings or pay them back by using the constant refrain “Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny?”

The extraordinary divine design on earth is not only displayed in the terrestrial realm but even extends beyond to the heavens. Once again, the Qur’an makes clear that human nature is instilled with a cosmic identity – an identity which is not reduced to the vast but yet limited earthly realm but is connected to the celestial dimension. Humanity can therefore not be constrained to spatial or geographical localities. That would belie true human nature. Q 6:96-97 states that, “He makes the dawn break; He makes the night for rest; and He made the sun and the moon to a precise measure. That is the design of the Almighty, the All Knowing.”

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its waves so that you may go in search of His bounty and give thanks. He has made mountains stand firm on the earth, to prevent it shaking under you, and rivers and paths so that you may find your way, and landmarks and stars to guide people. Can He who creates be compared to one who cannot create? Why do you not take heed? If you tried to count God’s blessings, you could never take them all in: He is truly most forgiving and most merciful,” Q 16:80-81, “It is God who has given you a place of rest in your homes and from the skins of animals made you homes that you find light [to handle] when you travel and when you set up camp; furnishings and comfort for a while from their wool, fur, and hair. It is God who has given you shade from what He has created, and places of shelter in the mountains; garments to protect you from the heat, and garments to protect you in your wars. In this way He perfects His blessings on you, so that you may devote yourselves to Him,” Q 17:12, “We made the night and the day as two signs, then darkened the night and made the daylight for seeing, for you to seek your Lord’s bounty and to know how to count the years and calculate. We have explained everything in detail,” Q 20:54-55, “So eat, and graze your cattle. There are truly signs in all this for people of understanding. From the earth We created you, into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time,” Q 22:65, “Have you not considered how God has made everything on the earth of service to you? And the ships that sail the sea at His command? That He keeps the heavens from falling down on the earth without His permission? God is most compassionate and most merciful to humankind,” Q 23:17-22, “We created seven levels above you: We are never unmindful of Our creation. We sent water down from the sky in due measure and lodged it in the earth – We have the power to take it all away if We so wish – with it We produced for you gardens of date palms and vines, with many fruits there for you to eat, and a tree, growing out of Mount Sinai, that produces oil and seasoning for your food. There is a lesson for you in livestock: We produce milk for you to drink from their bellies. And they have many other benefits: you eat them and you ride on them, as you do in ships,” Q 67:15, “It is He who has made the earth manageable for you – travel its regions; eat His provision – and to Him you will be resurrected,” Q 78:6-13, “Did We not make the earth smooth, and make the mountains to keep it stable? Did We not create you in pairs, give you sleep for rest, the night as a cover, and the day for your livelihood? Did We not build seven strong [heavens] above you, and make a blazing lamp?” Q 79:32-33, “And setting firm mountains [in it] for you and your animals to enjoy?”

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Peterson also rightly points out that God’s intention of creating this universe is not simply for human pleasure and joy. This world as the Qur’an time and again reminds its reader is one of hardships and challenges for human growth and flourishing. Human beings live in the world in order to be tested and tried as Q 11:7 states, “It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six Days – and His throne was on water – so as to test which of you does best.” In fact, the Qur’an in its entirety can be taken as a trial or test since it challenges the human being to either choose the good or insist on a self-centered lifestyle by neglecting God’s will and rejecting faith. In this sense, the Qur’an is guidance (hudā) as it often describes itself. It shows humankind the straight path and guides them to eternal happiness.

The Qur’an is therefore attached to human beings’ migrant nature pointing the way to the correct destination. The concepts of “trial” and “test” indicate a moral, intellectual and spiritual progression or regression of human beings. Humanity through these earthly God-given trials and examinations can either flourish to its true potential or decline according to the other destructive aspect of human nature. In this sense, the migrant aspect of humankind is once again affirmed. The Qur’an pushes its reader to be constantly in a motion of positive change and development. To remain “mentally” fixed and settled is contrary to the migratory character of the Qur’an.

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618 Peterson, “Creation,” 474.
619 See for instance Q 18:7, “We have adorned the earth with attractive things so that We may test people to find out which of them do best,” Q 67:2, “Who created death and life to test you and reveal which of you does best – He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.”
In many of its verses the Qur’an is adamant that all what is in the earth has been given ultimately by God. As such, making claims that resources, natural supplies or territories belong to humans are simply shattered and have no ground. The human claim to self-sufficiency is baseless, “There is the one who is miserly, who is self-satisfied, who denies goodness – We shall smooth his way towards hardship and his wealth will not help him as he falls,” (Q 92:8-11). Such self-centeredness and greed is only harmful to one’s own soul, “Though now you are called upon to give [a little] for the sake of God, some of you are grudging. Whoever is grudging is so only towards himself: God has no needs and you are the needy ones. He will substitute other people for you if you turn away, and they will not be like you,” (Q 47:38). Giving and sharing only benefits one’s own eternal happiness, “Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with God: be mindful of God as much as you can; hear and obey and give – it is for your own good. Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones,” (Q 64:15-16).

All this also alludes to the notion of the trust – the loan which entails everything human beings own as being entrusted by God. The arrogant human assertion that natural resources or other blessings which are enjoyed by one individual or group can be literally owned by that group only contradicts Qur’anic teachings. Frequently, the Qur’an relates arrogance and wealth together. Hoarding, greed and arrogance are all linked to each other, “God does not love the

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620 See for example Q 2:60, “Eat and drink the sustenance God has provided and do not cause corruption in the land,” Q 2:172, “You who believe, eat the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship,” Q 2:254, “You who believe, give from what We have provided for you, before the Day comes when there is no bargaining, no friendship, and no intercession. It is the disbelievers who are wrong,” Q 2:255, “All that is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him,” Q 3:109, “Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God; it is to Him that all things return,” Q 3:129, “Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God.”
conceited, the boastful, those who are miserly, and who tell other people to be miserly. If anyone
turns away, remember that God is self-sufficient and worthy of praise,” (Q 57:24). Or as Q 4:36-37
states,

Worship God; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents, to relatives, to
orphans, to the needy, to neighbours, near and far, to travellers in need, and to
your slaves. God does not like arrogant, boastful people, who are miserly and
order other people to be the same, hiding the bounty God has given them. We
have prepared a humiliating torment for such ungrateful people.

God is the sole benefactor from whom all bounties come without being mediated through
an intermediary as Q 35:15 famously points out, “People, it is you who stand in need of God –
God needs nothing and is worthy of all praise.” To be clear, human mediators of God’s bounty
remain subservient to God’s power, whether or not they are conscious of it. Only God can claim
true ownership of all the resources and earthly supplies since He is the ultimate and absolute
giver. Since God is understood to be the ultimate giver, offerings are interpreted merely as acts
of returning to Him what is ultimately His.

One ideal outcome after observing that the universe was created for the benefit of
humankind should be gratitude towards God – a central concept in the Qur’an tied to the notion
of faith. Gratitude however is not only understood in spiritual terms acknowledging the source of
all the blessings and bounties, namely God. It also brings with it an ethical and practical mandate
of rightful conduct and worship. 621 Humankind is hence called to express its gratitude in proper
worship and fair treatment of the universe. Ingratitude, on the other hand, is often linked to

disbelief (*kufr*) and denial of what ultimately belongs to God only.\(^{622}\) It is the stark opposite and twists one’s relationship with God and the own community.

Expressing gratitude towards God entails to share the blessings and resources He has given a person or community with others. God Himself loves to share and following this divine model is the demonstration of gratitude towards God. The Qur’an calls the believers to emulate divine generosity by showing human generosity as Q 24:33 reminds us, “And give them some of the wealth God has given you.”

In any case, the Qur’an asserts that the poor and needy have a natural, God-given right on a certain share of this wealth, “Giving a rightful share of their wealth to the beggar and the deprived,” (Q 51:19). Or as Q 70:24-25 puts it, “Who give a due share of their wealth to beggars and the deprived.” These verses again reiterate that human beings are only trustees of the blessings God has bestowed on them and that they have the moral obligation to share these goods.

Considering that all what humans possess is given by God to them bears hence consequences on how to treat those who have perhaps less or no access to these resources and bounties. God who is the ultimate owner of everything naturally has the moral right to request that people share the trusted goods He has given them for a temporary time. Human trusteeship of wealth, property and resources brings with it accountability for the way in which they are expended. Those who live up to this trust earn religious merit by expending them in a socially beneficial way. Such custodial capacity however does not take away the notion of private

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\(^{622}\) Sanneh, “Gratitude and Ingratitude;” 370.
ownership. The Qur'an recognizes it as a right which needs to be protected, “Do not eat up your property wrongfully, nor use it to bribe judges, intending sinfully and knowingly to eat up parts of other people’s property,” (Q 2:188). Thus, private ownership is acknowledged with only very few limitations securing the public interest.

As Azim Nanji observes, the Qur’an with its many teachings enjoins the believer to establish a just system – one which is characterized by social solidarity. Q 16:90 is a case in point, “God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you, so that you may take heed.”623 While Scripture acknowledges that every individual has a unique potential, owns diverse skills and resources, they are still called to share these richnesses with others. This is an expression of true piety, “Charitable men and women who make a good loan to God will have it doubled and have a generous reward,” (Q 57:18).624 As Nanji points out, those who insist on walking the counterpath are destined to punishment in the hereafter.625 Following verse makes this very clear:

Those who are miserly with what God has granted them out of His grace should not think that it is good for them; on the contrary, it is bad for them. Whatever they meanly withhold will be hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection. It is God who will inherit the heavens and earth: God is well aware of everything you do.” (Q 3:180).

Even engaging with the Qur’an from the surface demonstrates that stinginess, hoarding and ignoring the needs of those in need are considered major moral flaws.\textsuperscript{626} The Qur’an frequently stresses the moral value of giving and sharing God’s bounties.\textsuperscript{627} Such actions rely upon the ideals of compassion, social justice, sharing and strengthening the community. The delusion that by giving away or sharing one’s wealth and resources those same will diminish or minimize is not supported by the Qur’an. To the contrary, God increases one’s blessings with abundance and multiplies wealth instead of reducing it. The Qur’an states clearly that those charitable people should not fear falling into poverty. This is only a wrong threat pronounced by Satan. Not only that, but one should aspire to give from the best of their possessions. Q 2:267-268 refers to this in a succinct way,

You who believe, give charitably from the good things you have acquired and that We have produced for you from the earth. Do not seek to give the bad things that you yourself would only accept with your eyes closed: remember that God is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise. Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty

\textsuperscript{626} See for instance Q 69:30-34, “Take him, put a collar on him, lead him to burn in the blazing Fire, and [bind him] in a chain seventy metres long: he would not believe in Almighty God, he never encouraged feeding the destitute,” Q 74:42-44, “‘What drove you to the Scorching Fire?’ and they will answer, ‘We did not pray; we did not feed the poor,’” Q 89:18, “You do not urge one another to feed the poor,” Q 107:1-7, “[Prophet], have you considered the person who denies the Judgement? It is he who pushes aside the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy. So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer; those who are all show and forbid common kindnesses.”

\textsuperscript{627} For more examples on the qur’anic value of giving and sharing see Q 2:177, “Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God,” Q 2:261-262, “Those who spend their wealth in God’s cause are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. God gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes: He is limitless and all knowing. Those who spend their wealth in God’s cause, and do not follow their spending with reminders of benevolence or hurtful words, will have their rewards with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve,” Q 2:272, “Whatever charity you give benefits your own souls, provided you do it for the sake of God: whatever you give will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged,” Q 2:274, “Those who give, out of their own possessions, by night and by day, in private and in public, will have their reward with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve.”
and commands you to do foul deeds; God promises you His forgiveness and His abundance. God is limitless and all knowing.\textsuperscript{628}

This provides comfort and safety to those who might think that resources and wealth might be reduced by sharing them with others. The Qur’an makes clear that such an idea is simply unsubstantiated.

The term which frequently appears in relation to giving is the verb zakā which denotes the notion of growth. As Nanji explains, “the verb zakā suggests the idea of growth to emphasize that the giving of one’s resources is simultaneously an act which entails the cleansing of oneself and one’s property and, through sharing, an enhancement of the capacity of others. More specifically, this kind of giving is considered in the Qur’an to be analogous to a fertile garden whose yield is increased by abundant rain.”\textsuperscript{629} Nanji offers Q 2:265 to demonstrate this point: “But those who spend their wealth in order to gain God’s approval, and as an affirmation of their own faith, are like a garden on a hill: heavy rain falls and it produces double its normal yield; even if no heavy rain falls, it will still be watered by the dew. God sees all that you do.”

On the other hand, the Qur’an also states that God Himself tests people with the loss of property but that they should remain strong and know that this is a test from God. Their loss of property will not result in an absolute loss since God will eventually reward their patience and trust with other bounties,

We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops. But [Prophet] give good news to those who are steadfast, those who say,

\textsuperscript{628} See also Q 9:28, “If you are afraid you may become poor, [bear in mind that] God will enrich you out of His bounty if He pleases: God is all knowing and wise.”

\textsuperscript{629} Nanji, “Almsgiving,” 66-67.
when afflicted with a calamity, ‘We belong to God and to Him shall we return.’ These will be given blessings and mercy from their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided (Q 2:155-157).

In another instance the Qur’an maintains, “It is God who withholds and God who gives abundantly, and it is to Him that you will return” (Q 2:245). Those who give even in difficult times gain God’s love, “Who give, both in prosperity and adversity, who restrain their anger and pardon people – God loves those who do good” (Q 3:134). The virtuous believers give their wealth to the poor though it is dear to them and do not expect anything in return which is a true mark of sincerity, “They give food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive, though they love it themselves, saying, ‘We feed you for the sake of God alone. We seek neither recompense nor thanks from you. We fear the Day of Our Lord – a woefully grim Day,’” (Q 76:8-10). Or as Q 92:18-21 puts it, “Who gives his wealth away as self-purification, not to return a favour to anyone but for the sake of his Lord the Most High – and he will be well pleased.”

It is for humans however not easy to share and the Qur’an is very realistic about this by describing this dilemma as a struggle which needs to be overcome. In this vein many verses allude to this human quandary as in Q 4:95 for instance, “Those believers who stay at home, apart from those with an incapacity, are not equal to those who commit themselves and their possessions to striving in God’s way.” Or as Q 8:72 puts it, “Those who believed and emigrated [to Medina] and struggled for God’s cause with their possessions and persons, and those who gave refuge and help, are all allies of one another.”

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630 See also Q 9:44, “Those who have faith in God and the Last Day do not ask you for exemption from struggle with their possessions and their persons – God knows exactly who is mindful of Him,” Q 9:81, “Those who were
In order for goods to circulate vertically and downwards, they must be shared as noted by Q 59:7,

Whatever gains God has turned over to His Messenger from the inhabitants of the villages belong to God, the Messenger, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy, the traveler in need – this is so that they do not just circulate among those of you who are rich – so accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you. Be mindful of God: God is severe in punishment.

That such God-given bounties can be also distracting from the divine path by severe attachment to them is also reiterated in qur’anic passages such as these,

The love of desirable things is made alluring for humankind – women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland – these may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to. [Prophet], say, ‘Would you like me to tell you of things that are better than all of these? Their Lord will give those who are mindful of God Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will stay with pure spouses and God’s good pleasure – God is fully aware of His servants, (Q 3:14-15).

As Michael Bonner notes, the Qur’an makes unmistakably clear that worldly goods can also distract from the path to God. God addresses the delusion that possession and children will be of some help for them. In addition, scripture warns time and again that the acquisition of wealth is not a beneficial endeavor if it leads away from God.

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left behind were happy to stay behind when God’s Messenger set out; they hated the thought of striving in God’s way with their possessions and their persons,” Q 9:88, “But the Messenger and those who believe with him strove hard with their possessions and their person. The best things belong to them; it is they who will prosper.”


See for example, Q 3:10, “Neither their possessions nor their children will be any use to the disbelievers against God,” Q 3:116, “As for those who disbelieve, neither their possessions nor their children will help them against God – they will be companions in the Fire, there to remain,” Q 8:28, “Be aware that your possessions and your children are only a test, and that there is a tremendous reward with God,” Q 9:55, “So [Prophet] do not let their possessions or their children impress you: through these God intends to torment them in this world and for their souls to depart while they disbelieve,” Q 9:69, “You are like those who lived before you: they were even stronger than you, with
Many times the Qur’an describes how consideration of wealth and possessions can lead to wrong decisions. A case in point is the rejection of Saul by the children of Israel. They did not accept him because he did not meet their standards of richness:

Their Prophet said to them, ‘God has now appointed Talut to be your king,’ but they said, ‘How can he be king over us when we have a greater right to rule than he? He does not even have great wealth.’ He said, ‘God has chosen him over you, and has given him great knowledge and stature. God grants His authority to whoever He pleases: God is magnanimous, all knowing,’ (Q 2:247).

In another instance the reader encounters the story of Pharaoh and his followers who misguided other people by worldly goods and possessions, “And Moses said, ‘Our Lord, You have given Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour and wealth in this present life and here they are, Lord, leading others astray from Your path. Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that

more wealth and children; they enjoyed their share in this life as you have enjoyed yours; like them, you have indulged in idle talk.’ Their deeds go to waste in this world and the next; it is they who will lose all in the life to come,” Q 9:85, “Do not let their possessions and their children impress you: God means to torment them through these in this world, and that their souls should depart while they disbelieve,” Q 18:46, “Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope,” Q 26:88, “The Day when neither wealth nor children can help,” Q 34:35, “They would say, ‘We have greater wealth and more children than you, and we shall not be punished,’” Q 34:37, “Neither your wealth nor your children will bring you nearer to Us, but those who believe and do good deeds will have multiple rewards for what they have done, and will live safely in the lofty dwellings of Paradise,” Q 57:20, “Bear in mind that the present life is just a game, a diversion, an attraction, a cause of boasting among you, of rivalry in wealth and children. It is like plants that spring up after the rain: their growth at first delights the sowers, but then you see them wither away, turn yellow, and become stubble. There is terrible punishment in the next life as well as forgiveness and approval from God; the life of this world is only an illusory pleasure,” Q 58:17, “Neither their wealth nor their children will be of any use to them against God – they will be the inhabitants of Hell, where they will remain,” Q 63:9, “Believers, do not let your wealth and children distract you from remembering God: those who do so will be the ones who lose,” Q 64:15, “Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with God: be mindful of God as much as you can; hear and obey and give – it is for your own good.”

See for instance Q 15:84, “What they had gained was of no use to them,” Q 69:28, “My wealth has been no use to me, and my power has vanished,” Q 92:11, “And his wealth will not help him as he falls,” Q 111:1-2, “May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too! Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him.”

they do not believe until they see the agonizing torment,” (Q 10:88). The same behavior occurred during Prophet Muhammad’s life during which others were led astray by the rich people’s wealth, “They use their wealth to bar people from the path of God, and they will go on doing so. In the end this will be a source of intense regret for them: they will be overcome and herded towards Hell,” (Q 8:36).

The previous assessment made it abundantly clear that the Qur’an radically eradicates the notion of any claim to absolute human ownership over the vast resources of the earth. While maintaining the right of people to private property, the Qur’an still posits a moral imperative to distribute the God-given bounties among different members of the human family. Scripture fundamentally rejects the idea that certain people or communities have a privilege over others. Those in need and deprived of a dignified life have the moral right for distributive justice. Those who refuse to acknowledge this imperative and do not put it into practice will eventually be held accountable in the hereafter. At any rate, the miserly and greedy will have to pay their debt on the day of resurrection.

This brings us to the second aspect inherent in the creation narratives – the eschatological dimension. The belief in the hereafter features as a major theme in the Qur’an and it is therefore no surprise that this element appears also in the verses under consideration. Eschatological reflections in the Qur’an basically underline the migrant identity of every human being. Humanity as announced in the verses above will only stay temporarily on the earth performing its custodial duty by mirroring the divine attributes and maintaining the divine balance in the

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creation. The verses indicate that humankind’s ultimate destination will be to the hereafter – the original departure point. Q 2:36 reminds the human being that “On earth (al-arda) you will have a place to stay (mustaqarran) and livelihood (matā’un) for a time (ilā hīn).” And again Q 7:24-25 states unequivocally, “‘On earth you will have a place to stay and livelihood – for a time (fī-larda mustaqarrun wa matā’un ilā hīn).’ He said, ‘There you will live (tahyawna); there you will die (tamūtūna); from there you will be brought out (tukhrajūna).’”

The clear references in the Qur’an to the central belief in the afterlife are so many that it suffices to provide only a minor selection of the many verses reiterating this idea. Since we have already pointed to the celestial home in the section on radical hospitality these verses only support the notion that human beings are on a journey towards God. Q 30:19 reads, “He brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living. He gives life to the earth after death, and you will be brought out in the same way.” Q 36:78-79 states also, “He says, ‘Who can give life back to bones after they have decayed?’ Say, ‘He who created them in the first place will give them life again: He has full knowledge of every act of creation.’” Or as Q 36:83, “So glory be to Him in whose Hand lies control over all things. It is to Him that you will all be brought back.” On other occasion the Qur’an maintains, “How can you ignore God when you were lifeless and He gave you life, when He will cause you to die, then resurrect you to be returned to Him?” (Q 2:28). Furthermore, “It is He who gave you [people] life, will cause you to die, then will give you life again – but the human being is ungrateful,” (Q 22:66). And Q 30:40 equally asserts, “It is God who created you and provided for you, who will cause you to die and then give you life
again. Can any of your ‘partners’ do any of these things? Glory be to God, and exalted be He above the partners they attribute to Him.”

Scripture often links faith in God with the belief in the day of resurrection or yawm al-qiyāma. On the basis of human ethical and moral behavior in this life, judgment in the hereafter will accordingly take place. This once again reiterates the idea that there is a direct relationship between the worldly life (al-dunyā) and the afterlife (al-ākhira). It is this interconnection of the two worlds which brings to mind the cosmic identity of the human being who does not only possess a terrestrial but also a celestial identity. Expanding spatial or territorial categories of identities is therefore immensely important in the eyes of the Qur’an as they can otherwise blind human beings to fully settle in this world.

We have already stated that the Qur’an does not however embrace an escapist or world-denying attitude. Rather, it calls its audience to embrace these two realms, yet never losing focus of one’s heavenly journey. While the present life (al-dunyā) and the afterlife (al-ākhira) are inextricably linked by ethical accountability, they are also obviously distinct. The earthly dimension is characterized as being the sphere of action and the other as the place of reward or punishment for human actions. Time and again the Qur’an reminds the reader that the present life is the place of vanity and deceitful pleasures. The hereafter instead is the lasting home of permanence and true life, “The life of this world is nothing but a game and a distraction; the home in the Hereafter is best for those who are aware of God. Why will you [people] not understand?” (Q 6:32).
As we have seen, the most important difference between the worldly life and the eternal life is not that the former is an abode of physical enjoyment and the latter a place of sole spiritual delights. As it was obvious, the heavenly delights resemble in many facets also physical or carnal pleasures. More importantly the distinction lies in the qur’anic idea that earthly delights are only temporary and can therefore result in pain and suffering through the unavoidable fact of separation or the inherent ephemeral nature of everything that is existent in this world. Since the human being desires those joys to be endless, losing sight of the hereafter can lead to spiritual torment. While the world is subject to change and finitude, the celestial abode is not. It is a constant, eternal and enduring place of heavenly delights. The Qur’an however makes it plain that humans can fall into heedlessness and forgetfulness about their ultimate journey and therefore constantly issues reminders not to attach oneself too strongly to the worldly realm. It is in this sense that the theme of the resurrection and afterlife features so prominently in the qur’anic world.

Such temporality of the life on earth is affirmed by qur’anic references pointing to the determined life span of the human being. The Qur’an describes that every human being has a certain fixed term (ajal) to live. In this vein, Q 6:2 reads, “He is the one who created you from clay and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time, known only to Him; yet still you doubt!” Q 7:34 states similarly, “There is a time set for every people: they cannot hasten it, nor, when it comes, will they be able to delay it for a single moment.”^637 God also determines a fixed

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^637 See also Q 16:61, “If God took people to task for the evil they do, He would not leave one living creature on earth, but He reprieves them until an appointed time: when their time comes they cannot delay it for a moment nor
term for communities as Q 10:49 describes, “Say [Prophet], ‘I cannot control any harm or benefit that comes to me, except as God wills. There is an appointed term for every community, and when it is reached they can neither delay nor hasten it, even for a moment.’” Q 15:4-5 echoes the same notion, “Never have We destroyed a community that did not have a set time; no community can bring its time forward, nor delay it.”

As stated previously, the Qur’anic understanding of eschatology with all its various facets and dimensions stresses the migrant character of every human being. In this sense, the immigrant reminds the one who is “settled” and “in place” of the migratory nature of human life. The illusion that one can fully belong to the world is shattered and erased by the Qur’an. Humanity is on the journey to God and anything in the world which can be of benefit on the other side is worthwhile to engage. In that regard, the Qur’an regards this present life as a ploughing field through which one prepares for the celestial home. Such a concept calls both migrant and host to active duty and responsibility on the earth. To neglect this world is impossible since it plays a major role in determining one’s fate in the hereafter. The world’s temporality and vanishing nature alerts the believer not to direct one’s desire for eternity and infinite happiness on to this present life. Otherwise the disappointment, frustration, pain and suffering arising out of separation from loved ones, familiar places and cessation of limited pleasures is inevitable.

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can they bring it forward,” Q 20:129, “If it were not for a previous Word from your Lord [Prophet], the inevitable would have happened. Their time has been set.”
Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The foregoing assessment demonstrated that it is clearly possible to articulate an Islamic theological discourse on migration based on the creation narratives. In that context, the study has also detected elements from Christian theological reflections on migration within the qur’anic creation narratives. Taking the Ur-migrants and the creation accounts as departure point has shown that the Qur’an is rich enough to construct an Islamic theology of migration. The present study has by far not exhausted the qur’anic resources and references in this regard and shows only that further research needs to be undertaken to provide additional theological perspectives on migration. This treatment has only focused on one particular segment of the qur’anic discourse – the move of the Ur-migrants from heaven to earth.

That the hadīth corpus for instance can add much more to these reflections is out of question. It is crucial not to sideline the Prophetic sunna, for the Qur’an itself points to the importance of Muhammad in explicating scriptural teachings. Taking both sources together will be a more rounded approach and offer a fuller understanding of the qur’anic verses. Further research in this area can enrich the Islamic discourse on migration but given the scope of this study such a project could not be undertaken in this framework.

Nonetheless, examining the Qur’an in the context of migration from this very limited point of view has brought several major components to the forefront and revealed many points of agreement between the two traditions as summarized in the following.
5.1 The Fundamental Dignity of Human Life

As evident, the foundational concept of God-given dignity and the sacred nature of humankind is constantly affirmed within these Qur’anic depictions. In all of the segments of the creation narratives, this theme is continuously stressed. From the very beginning of the divine announcement up to the very end of the final return of humankind to their celestial home, the sanctity of human life is underlined. In choosing the human being as His own vicegerent, God Himself assigns the greatest value and worth to His creation. He is always directly, personally and intimately involved with all human affairs. This theme of divine immediacy is particularly stressed through the act of creation. The great honor and value bestowed on human beings is expressed by the fact that humans carry something “God-like” from their original heavenly home – the divine spirit (rūḥ). God shares something from Him with humanity. To honor God is to honor the human being.

The use of God’s “two hands” which was interpreted by Muslims as a special honor to human beings also underlines the extraordinary rank God has given them. Compared to the rest of creation, only they are created with God’s two hands. From the divine intent, the creation, God’s breathing His divine spirit into the human form, the teaching of the names, God’s forgiveness and His radical hospitality expressed through all earthly and heavenly delights up until humanity’s return to the heavenly home, God’s love, mercy, compassion and care for the human being is clearly evident.

Such value is intrinsic to the human being and cannot be questioned – not even by the angels who inquire as for why God intends to create another species if they already glorify Him
in high praise and adoration. God prefers the human being over the angels and despite the obvious human capacity to be destructive and shed blood and corruption on earth. God dismisses the angels’ objection by telling them that they do not know everything about this creature. God who is very aware of this “burden” still overrules it by believing in the goodness of humanity and its constructive potential and overall “benefit.” The latter, as many commentators point out, far outweighs the former. God’s answer is one of hope and trust in humanity. The misbehavior of humankind cannot take away its overall positive accomplishments since it is always harder to perform the good instead of the evil. To do the good is connected to a range of requirements and conditions for it is to overcome your inner negative challenges and obstacles. To commit evil, instead, is not bound to any rule and it is therefore much easier to be in a destructive habit.

If God Himself views His creation as such, namely in the highest manner and places a high status on them, human beings themselves should likewise have a high regard of themselves and their fellow beings. This implies to refrain from approaching each other with negative views or solely focusing on the destructive and burdensome aspects of human nature. This is only one part of the human being and should not distract anyone from full embrace of the other. At the same time, such divine explications counter negative and self-destructive views.

These points need to be stressed since migrants can be often perceived as a burden to society or as harmful to the overall well-being of the larger community. In addition, migrants themselves can internalize feelings of inferiority and a lack of self-esteem. This should not be as the Qur’an teaches for God has bestowed on human blessings special favors and the title of khalīfa which points to the true inner identity of humans. To view oneself as low and invaluable
is to neglect and disrespect divine wisdom and dismiss the fact that God has created the human being with an extraordinary potential to pursue knowledge and other skills. Furthermore, it would also count as a disrespect to God’s plan if someone regards others as inferior, absolutizes or romanticizes one’s own culture, race or ethnicity. A proper understanding of the title of khalīfa is a middle position neither perceiving oneself as superior to others nor inferior to other beings. It is a state of humility and responsibility by also acknowledging the value and dignity God has given to all. As noted before, a degradation, devaluing of human life or setting up categories of “benefit” or “burden” when approaching people are again dismissed by qur’anic standards.

That God assigns great value to the human being is further underlined by the fact that the human person is chosen by God to act as His vicegerent – the khalīfa – on earth. In our lengthy discussion on this concept, it became evident through the commentarial tradition that the notion of khalīfa lends itself to a now major and established interpretation of the human being placed as God’s vicegerent – khalīfat Allah – on earth. It finds its strongest formulation in the modern period. God trusts in the abilities and the high potential of human beings while equipping them with the huge capacity to fulfill various tasks on earth. In stating this in a very general and inclusive way, the Qur’an does not exclude any human being from the call of vicegerency but regards each and every human being as suitable for this divine duty. To be a khalīfa of God on earth posits an immense responsibility to humanity in being active, dynamic, constructive and wise caretakers of the earth. This obligation is not limited to a certain space or locale. As the Qur’an puts it, the notion of khalīfa transcends specific terrains and needs to be displayed in
every setting. It applies equally to all human affairs and spheres of life whether it be personal, social or otherwise.

In that regard, Christian reflections on migration have generally focused on issues of the responsibility to welcome the newcomer, display the virtue of hospitality and show deep care and compassion for the migrant. As such, these reflections mirror the tendency of traditional Christian societies to perceive themselves as the host to incoming new communities. As Snyder and others correctly point out, while Islam is also rich in providing theological discussions on radical hospitality, the broad contemporary Muslim experience with migration was and continues to be one as being a migrant and a newcomer often into a society which shows anxieties or hostility towards Muslims. The Muslim self sees itself therefore in a responsibility as migrant rather than to migrants. It is therefore crucial to call both sides to action and responsibility. Hence, the concept of khalīfa provides a solid theological ground to invite migrants and host to equal accountability and live up to the trust God has placed on human beings. It is a rounded concept which reiterates the fundamental dignity of human life while also pointing out that every individual needs to do an important share for societies to flourish and progress.

The theme of the sanctity of human life is further reiterated by the notion of the divine names. Not only does God teach humankind all the names, knowledge and sciences but He has also created every being as a unique configuration of the divine names. These divine sparks or dim reflections of God’s attributes within human beings demonstrate the high regard God shows towards them. As such, to revere God is to honor His creation and to respect every being as an

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extraordinary mirror of God’s divine qualities. Being taught the divine names and having also
the ability to reflect them in their own lives, humanity is able to live up to their high potential
and perform good in various ways. The concept of the divine names teaches humanity as a whole
that each individual can be a productive and valuable member of society and that everyone can
contribute in unique ways to the common good since everyone is unique in their creation.

As alluded earlier in the section on the divine names, this also implies that every
individual has a responsibility to pursue knowledge including necessary languages to
communicate and acquire skills in order to ensure that this human potential comes out in its
fullest form. To fall into a passive attitude and neglect to strive for education and knowledge is
simply a disrespect and dishonor to divine wisdom. On the other hand, proper frameworks and
settings need to be established so that every human being has a fair access to educational
opportunities. To uphold the dignity of human life is to ensure that all aspects of the human
being are nurtured and nourished.

5.2 The Relational Character of Human Beings

As it became evident in our treatment on the specific act of creation, human beings carry
a relational character in their human nature. In so many instances, the Qur’an employs the term
al-insān referring to the social dimension of the human being. Humans are sociable beings
seeking a connection and cannot by their very nature be on their own. They stand first and
foremost in relation and as a response to God through their creation and their testimony through
the primordial covenant. While each and every human soul and body has been uniquely created
they all responded in collective fashion to the divine question. This affirms not only the
individuality and importance of every person but also the collective and relational nature of humankind.

All human beings are created out of the seemingly inferior substance of clay. They share the same qualities in that regard and can relate to one another. This means that in their essence they are all from the same human family emphasizing the relational aspect only once more. While the particularity and individuality of every being is affirmed through the detailed description of the nature and origin of the clay, the collective spirit of human unity is equally stressed. At the same time, they all possess a rūḥ – the divine spirit – which connects them to each other and establish familiarity with one another.

The individual flourishes through community and is intrinsically related to it. As mentioned earlier, the social aspect and need is sustained primarily through familial relationships and the community at large. This family unit is clearly highlighted through the creation of Adam’s wife who is described as being someone who provides comfort and repose. There is no question that this relationship offers first and foremost emotional comfort and tranquility to both spouses as the Qur’an often highlights. The exegetical tradition draws the attention to the aspect of intimacy, closeness, complementarity and relationality. As stated earlier, the typical elements of human conjugal life, common dwelling, love and mercy are a blessing from God.

Husband and wife in this respect are depicted as garments for each other. In order to provide that safety and warmth it is necessary that they remain skin close. They conceal each other’s weaknesses, cover one another’s mistakes, and offer security and comfort. It is therefore difficult to see them performing this divine call while being separate from each other. That
spouses were created by God to find tranquility within each other defies practices of forceful segregation and separation. That the Qur’an warns its audience “not to sever the ties of kinship” speaks to the unshaken significance of this social dimension of the human being. It is a priority set by God to preserve these bonds and bears a moral imperative to support and sustain these family units as much as possible. Parental relationships are as important as spousal ones and are often mentioned directly after the command not to associate any partners with God and to be thankful to Him.

This relational element has important ramifications for debates on family re-unification often present in migration issues. Families are often forcefully separated because of legal or political issues or due to certain requirements they need to fulfill before entering a new country. Solutions need to be developed which accept the importance of the family unit for a healthy flourishing society in which newcomers can thrive through the support of their family members. Present day political and legal practices within the realities of immigration have led to some wrong decisions to forcefully uncut these relational ties within the smaller family. They have not only caused emotional and psychological pain among migrant families but also led to a larger instability among societies as migrants cannot be productive and constructive citizens in their new environment without the needed mental support the family unit provides.

5.3 The Sanctity of Human Bodies

The creation narratives revealed not only the importance of the spiritual dimension of the human being but also pointed to the sacredness of the physical aspect of humans – namely their bodies. The Qur’an employs the term al-bashar to characterize the human being’s physical form
or body. In the creation narratives this term has appeared several times. As highlighted in this work, the dignification of human bodies can be traced in the Qur’an which regards bodily parts as special blessings created by God. Each organ and bodily function will even testify at the end of times whether it was treated according to divine wisdom or not. Those who have exploited human bodies for their selfish and worldly interests will therefore be held accountable for the injustices they have committed. The mistreatment and abuse of labor workers is no secret when talking about contemporary migration practices. The degradation of human bodies for personal and material profit is strongly condemned by qur’anic standards. The Qur’an upholds a holistic approach towards the well being of humanity and regards both spiritual and physical health as important. To revere God-given bodies entails to prevent any harm and excessive burden. Such an ethical imperative becomes even more important in light of the fact that many migrants suffer under inhumane working conditions which have also led to mental and psychological issues.

As discussed in this work, the Qur’an singles out various parts and organs of the body by discussing their significance for deepening one’s faith and spiritual progress. The body’s wellbeing needs to be preserved since it is a vessel for one’s spiritual progress. For the cultivation of faith and its important rituals the body is indispensable. In order to reach spiritual enlightenment and nourish the soul – the inner dimension of human beings – reflection on the body is key. That bodily parts and organs have been created for a specific ethical and moral purpose becomes clear in the many passages. The Qur’an highlights the fact that the body with all its functions is a God-given blessing and as such cannot be claimed to be owned by the person or other human beings. Proper worship of the creator entails the proper use of the body and all of
its functions according to divine guidance. References on that can be found throughout the Qur’anic text.

That the body is deemed as valuable and sanctified is further emphasized through the references to physical enjoyment in paradise. If the body would not be that important the Qur’an would not draw attention to physical pleasures in heaven which clearly are connected with the body. Those who have devoted their selves including their bodies to the path of God will be rewarded not only with spiritual but also with physical pleasures. If God deems the body as significant how can humans do otherwise? It is quite telling that Muslim jurists have on the basis of the main authoritative sources of Qur’an and Sunna derived that the preservation of the human body needs to be included into the framework of the overall well-being of humans.

In an era in which bodies are treated as commodities and exploited for material goods and benefits, a theology of embodiment calls all people back to a responsible treatment of human bodies which are sacred. If the human body is exploited to such a degree that it cannot perform its basic functions of worship for which it was essentially created in a physically stable way, then proper measures need to be taken. God describes Himself as the best of creators and to honor His creation is to treat it in the best manner possible.

5.4 The Pilgrim Principle

The creation stories have also brought to the forefront the migrant character of human beings. This aspect is inherent to human identity. As such, all human beings are “migrants” in a larger sense. Adam appears as the culmination of creation. The clay – the material and physical aspects of human beings – is collected from the surface of the earth and taken up to the heavens,
sent back on earth through the creation of the human being and will eventually return for good to
the heavenly realm. This notion of upward and downward mobility shows us that migration is
intrinsic to human beings. It is the very material they are made out of.

Beginning from the depiction of human creation in the womb, the Qur’an points to a
gradual and dynamic process intrinsic to human growth and development. The creation of the
human and the universe happens in stages. God Himself constantly displays His creative activity
in the cosmos as the Qur’an points out time and over again. This is also reflected in the creation
of humanity. As such, human beings are not static creatures, they are constantly in motion, in
activity and mobile. They are evolving, subject to change and can either progress or regress
depending on the use of their dual capacities.

The rūḥ in this sense also confirms the mobile nature of human beings. Following divine
order, it mediates the eternal and the temporal. It wanders between the realm of the unseen and
the visible world. It moves, as the Qur’an tells us, during the time of sleep. The spirit is not a
material or spatial entity. It is not from the worldly realm and it is breathed from God into the
human being. It has the ability to leave the human body and return back. It is mobile in that it can
be taken back to God and returned back to the bodies who are asleep. It transcends the earthly
order and connects to the extraterrestrial dimension. Ultimately, the rūḥ has to return to God – its
original place of departure. This is the only logical conclusion. As such, it cannot remain on
earth forever and as the Qur’an time and again reminds its audience, all human spirits will be
taken back to God.
That such a human migrant identity is also intimately connected to the migratory event of the Qur’an should come as no surprise. The Qur’an was revealed in stages and equally mirrors much of the migrant predicament of ridicule, rejection and exclusion. The Qur’an provides therefore comfort and solace to those who feel discriminated against and maltreated by their host communities. At the same time, the Qur’an models a positive behavior to its hearers. It is one of activism, positive and constructive behavior and constant engagement with one’s new environment and surroundings. The Qur’an’s ongoing process of divine revelation and its responsive dimension provides guidance for those who seek to overcome challenges as migrants. As I have noted earlier, if the Qur’an is identified by elements of dynamism, progression, movement, change and flow, the same attitude can be displayed by those who strive to internalize its message. To embody the Qur’an entails to emulate the Prophetic model which is not to settle completely in this world as well as not to neglect it, yet remain focused on one’s eternal journey to God.

Furthermore, the qur’anic division of Meccan and Medinan suras reminds the believers of the historical emigration and how central a place it should occupy in their collective identity. In addition, it also calls into mind that migration is a mutual benefit and not a one-sided burden. Similar to the historical event of the migration from Mecca to Medina through which the helpers and the emigrants mutually did benefit, migration can be a mutual blessing for both parties – the newcomers and the receiving community. That this event has come to occupy such a central role in the formation of the Qur’an and its community is not a simple affair.
Considering all of the above, the migrant can therefore never be the other but is simply someone who should remind every human being of their true inner identity of being a migrant. The migrant testifies to the ephemeral nature of this world, the fact that all bounties and resources given by God are not infinite but only for temporal benefit and enjoyment. This migrant identity teaches human beings not to be too attached to this world but invest themselves in it as long as it benefits the hereafter. It calls people to strike a delicate balance of being involved in the world but nevertheless completely detached from it with the heart. The migrant is a mirror reminding others not to think of the resources in this world as endless and take care of these in the best way. Through their life stories migrants exemplify that resources cannot be taken for granted and that life is vanishing and unstable.

5.5 Transcending Humanly Constructed Boundaries – Expanding Identities

One of the aims in the theological discourse on migration is to transcend humanly constructed boundaries, borders and labels. Whether they be of social, legal or political nature, such categories often distract from the real identity of the human person. They become distractive and reductionist as they do not fully capture the intrinsic vast capacity of human beings. The Qur’an does not posit a sharp distinction between the earthly realm and the heavenly abode. Constant reminders not to fully settle in the world and lose sight of the extraterrestrial realm abound in the Qur’an. Human beings have a tendency to fall into forgetfulness about their original destination and place too much value on worldly goals. As we have seen in the analysis of the depiction of the earth and heavens, God’s expansive bestowal of blessings and favors and His dominion over all spheres indicate that all places are equally valuable and sacred. Over and
over, the interrelated nature of the cosmos is stressed. That such a portrayal of the creation at large bears ramifications for understandings of human identity and responsibility is out of question.

As evident in the creation narratives, true human identity cannot be limited to spatial, terrestrial or territorial spheres. Humanity was created in primordial time in an extraterrestrial realm. As such, humankind cannot be defined by ethnicity, nationality, race or national borders and passports only. They have a much greater role to play in the universe – one which extends to the heavens and the celestial abode. As a being which was created in the heavenly realm and who ultimately will return back to that original departure point, humanity’s significance far exceeds the earthly realm. The interconnected nature of the heavens and the earth points to a greater identity inherited by humankind. As such, this cosmic identity defies the notion that borders are absolute and can be taken as final identifiers in assessing where humans belong to. God simply denotes the entire earth for their custodial duties and carrying out their position as *khulafāʾ* of God. The *khalīfa* verse designates the entire earth as place of assignment. This means that human beings are equipped with the capacity to settle anywhere and that their responsibility cannot be strictly reduced to national or territorial interests alone.

The very existence and nature of Muhammad’s prophethood additionally signifies that humanity is not simply bound to a specific location to display the Qur’anic message and live it out fully. Muhammad’s existence as a universal messenger does not only promote coexistence among the human family it also reiterates the interconnected nature of the heavenly and earthly abode as he was sent as a “mercy to the worlds” (*al-rahmatan li’l-‘ālamīn*). The plurality
stressed here posits an ethical and moral imperative to his followers. They should not confine themselves to some locale but cultivate instead a broader vision for humanity and the entire creation.

The specific act of creation with the employment of the clay (ṭīn) and the spirit (rūḥ) also supports the notion that human beings have a much wider identity than those reduced to territories, nation states or other limited labels. As we have seen in our analysis of the interpretive tradition, the clay is described as being from all corners of the earth thus pointing to humankind’s wide relationship and connection with the planet. Moreover, the clay is taken by the angel up to the heavens. The possibility of upward mobility of clay is noteworthy for the interconnection of the heavens and earth. Once again, the tradition affirms that human beings cannot be confined to certain earthly areas. What is more, the dried clay (ṣalṣāl) and the dark mud (ḥamaʾin masnūn) indicate also that the four elements of the universe – earth, water, air, and fire – are involved in the creation of the human being. This alludes to humanity being a microcosm of the entire universe. Such a deep relationship with the cosmos confirms the real and true identity of the human being. Constructed borders, boundaries, territories or nation-states can never fully grasp the whole nature of humankind.

This is also true when looking at the nature of the rūḥ. The divine spirit in particular and humanity in general cannot be solely reduced to an earthly or material existence. The invisible and non-physical aspects of human existence are much wider than any limited location and again refer to a “cosmic identity” inherently connecting people to the whole of the universe going way beyond artificial lines and drawings.
That human beings have a wider identity is also apparent through the concept of the divine names. As discussed, humankind has not only been taught the divine names, but are also created as mirrors or limited manifestations of these divine attributes. These divine names are displayed as signs in the entire cosmos and establish an interconnection among all creation. It is for this reason that Islamic tradition considers the entire universe as a place of prostration in which every being performs the innate and individual duty of worship. Since the sacred signs are displayed anywhere there can be no one spot designated as more sacred or less sacred than other places. A superiority of a certain territory over another one cannot be given. Claims of borders being absolute and primary have no ground then.

Hence, human beings who are infused with the divine names possess an expansive nature connecting them to the entire universe which is likewise mirroring the beautiful names of God. Their identity cannot be reduced to a territorial or national one alone. They should be therefore able to establish relationships in new settings since these sacred ties and points of similarities naturally open up paths for encounter and understanding. If the cosmos is infused with the creational signs of the divine names a familiarity can be cultivated and feelings of alienation and estrangement can be reduced. Those who cling to the divine names of nearness or *tashbīh* will find ways of relating to their surroundings as they equally possess qualities of the divine. It is however up to the individual to show the willingness to uncover these points of connections. If these common identity factors are read and deciphered by people, it is unlikely that they will feel alienated or estranged in the universe because God’s sacred presence is partially manifest everywhere. If, however, human beings refuse to decipher these signs or divine names, they
naturally will fall into darkness and experience a sense of isolation, distance and perhaps hostility. A full revelation of God’s names, His absolute generosity or compassion for instance will take place in the hereafter.

That humanity shares a deep relationship through the primordial covenant testifies in the same manner to the vast and expansive nature of human beings. All souls were once gathered in front of God and responded in a collective “We” to the divine question. This implies that humanity stands already in a strong relationship to one another and that one’s ties and connections far extend beyond the micro unit of the family.

5.6 Radical Hospitality

The notion of the trust (al-amāna) has equally shown that human beings can make no claim to ownership at all. Fundamentally, everything in the universe and anything they “apparently” possess – their bodies, skills, faculties, emotions, wealth, children and resources – all are from God and belong ultimately to Him. He has the sole ethical and moral right to decide how His creation should make use of those since He is the true owner as the Qur’an over and over affirms. God has bestowed numerous spiritual and material blessings on humankind and they are to hold them for Him and make use of them in the most appropriate manner as outlined by divine guidance and revelation. As the term indicates they will return the trust until a specified time and God will question His servants how they made use of all the bounties He gave to humankind. The trust entails to surrender to God’s will and most often the Qur’an exhorts human beings to share the God-given blessings with their fellow beings. As such, the trust
eradicates claims of absolute sovereignty of any human or natural resources. To acknowledge that God is the sole giver entails to share resources with others.

As obvious in the qur’anic depictions of paradise and earth, God displays His ultimate generosity, love, mercy and compassion through countless earthly blessings and heavenly delights. He has created the earth in a manner suitable for the flourishing of humankind and has provided all kinds of material and spiritual goods accessible to everyone as long as human greed and corruption do not interfere. There is no exclusion of anyone. The earth, the temporal abode, has been equipped with all what humans need for their stay. Emotionally and physically, material and immaterial blessings are all made available by God.

Radical hospitality includes embrace of everyone and God’s mercy is bestowed on all humans. That many refuse to confirm their lives to this divine attitude of hospitality is clear through Iblīs’ refusal to bow down. Among his followers are those who equally claim in an arrogant and haughty manner that they are much more privileged and superior than other beings and therefore possess a certain entitlement. Believers can equally fall prone to such a mistaken behavior. They assume their degree is above others and therefore display an exclusionary behavior by denying them access to the divine bounties they enjoy. This is radically condemned by qur’anic standards as we have seen. Radical hospitality not only entails that one shares the material blessings given by God with others but it also implies to be emotionally hospitable in embracing the other. Hospitality is to honor and respect the newcomer by creating an inclusionary environment conducive for the common good. The opposite results in social sicknesses like racism, aggressive nationalism or other articulations of superiority.
Similar to Iblīs who is regarded as the first being who employed *qiyās*, many of his followers will use their own limited rational human standards to set up measurements of value. The Qur’an however condemns these attempts to categorize human beings according to some superficial logic or human criteria. They do not apply to God’s wisdom and can never capture them fully. Arrogant attitudes towards other human beings are not an offense only to humankind but to God Himself who has elevated each being. It is therefore a crime against God to degrade and devalue a human being. Human notions of deficiency or value are completely irrelevant in the divine plan. To refuse to create a hospitable atmosphere is to question God’s divinity and wisdom. It is not unusual within the contemporary migration debate to construct certain categories and superficial labels in order to assign people different ranks. These are mere human constructs which not only alienate people from one another but also alienate the human being from God. Arrogance is socially destructive because it focuses excessively on differences instead of on the common ties. Radical hospitality implies a state of humility which sees others more deserving of God’s blessings and therefore shares them constantly.

God’s blessings and bounties, however, are not simply provided on earth. The utmost expression of divine hospitality will be fully experienced in the heavenly realm. In the very beginning of the creation narratives, Adam and his wife are invited to dwell in the heavenly garden and enjoy all kinds of joys. It is there where God offers full comfort – emotional and otherwise. These Qur’anic depictions of hospitality therefore provide guidance to humankind how to emulate divine hospitality in their own lives. It is to address human physical, emotional
and spiritual needs. Greed and stinginess are totally contrary to the Islamic virtue of hospitality. In fact, sharing resources and blessings with others increases the blessings.

5.7 Eschatological Reflections

Hospitality is most radically expressed with God’s invitation to humankind to enjoy an eternal life of happiness and joy. As indicated by the tree of eternity, human beings have a strong longing for an everlasting, unending and infinite life. The Qur’an time and again reiterates that this worldly life is of temporal, vanishing and ephemeral character. It is unstable and insecure. It can never fulfill the infinite desires and vast needs of humankind. Only life in the hereafter can satisfy the human yearning for eternity. In the heavenly realm there will be no separation, no pain or suffering. This world however is a place of examination, trials and temptations.

As previously noted, this eschatological reflection underlines the migrant character of every human being. Since humanity cannot be fully satisfied here on this earth, they are by their very nature moved to go on to another place – one which provides all they are longing for. The return to the original home is unavoidable and is destined by God. The belief in afterlife is a major theme in the Qur’an and always reminds people not to fall into forgetfulness and be aware of their migrant nature. Humanity is constantly on a journey towards God. In this sense, the migrant serves as a constant reminder that life is of a fleeting nature and that ultimately separation is unavoidable – whether it be from one’s body, youth, family, wealth or “home.” Since the human being desires those joys to be endless, losing sight of the hereafter can lead to spiritual torment. While the world is subject to change and finitude, the celestial abode is not. Therefore, the Qur’an alerts its audience never to lose sight of one’s ultimate destination.
Appendix

Turkish Migrant Poems on Germany (*Almanya*)

**Almanya – Germany**
by Ozan Karapeçe

Oralarda rahat ol, diyorsun “Sağol” ama
Nasıl rahat olayım, bu elleni bana sor
Bu Gurbet “cam kesiği” tuz sanyor yarama
Yürek yangınlıklarında, bu külleri bana sor

*You say, live comfortably over there, I say “Thank you” but
How can I be in comfort, ask me
This Gurbet is like a “glass piece” adding salt into my wounds
The heart is on fire, ask me about the ashes*

İlk bahar çoktan geçti, yaz görmeden güzel geldi
Bir kaç sene demiştım, yarımsızuz tez geldi
Ekmeke para derken, Özlem, hasret viz geldi
Haftaları, ayları, bu yılları bana sor

*Spring is long gone, fall arrived without summer being seen
I said only a few years, but half a century arrived fast
While I thought about bread money, I did not care about the longing and yearning
Ask me about the weeks, months, about these years*

Burası uzak diyar, dört tarafım yabancı
Geceleri hüzünlü, sabahlar sinini sancı
Ezan sesi yerine, çalınca çamı çancı
Felaha umud eden, bu halleri bana sor

*This is a far away land, all my four sides are foreign
The nights are melancholic, the mornings are insidious and painful
Instead of the call to prayer, the bells are played
I hope for prosperity, ask me about these conditions*
Koptuk geldik sıldan, fakirlikten yokluktan
Dört kuşak, yitik nesil, Elli yıl geçti çoktan
Yürek nasıl vaz geçsin, Torun, çoluk çocuktan
Sabır, La Havle diyen bu dilleri bana sor

We departed from our customs, from poverty and nothingness
Four generations, a lost generation, fifty years have passed away
How can the heart give up, grandchildren, wife and children
Patience, all power is by God, ask me about these statements

Maden ocaklarında, kömürü yuta yuta
Fabrikada eriyen, demiri tuta tuta
En pis işte çalıştık, baṣta emir komuta
Çürüyen dizlerimi, bu belleri bana sor

In the coal mines, swallowing the coal dust constantly
Constantly holding the iron in the factories
We worked in the worst professions, following all orders
Come ask me about my decaying knees, my back

Şimdi hayat çok uzak, yaşasakda ömür az
Allah nasip etsede, sıldada olsak biraz
Hiç değilse ölünce, Cenazemizde namaz
Kılar üç beş müslüman, o kulları bana sor

Now life is too far away, even if we live, our life is too short
If God would allow us to be in our home again
At least at our funeral prayer
Three or five Muslims could pray over us, come and ask me about these states
Almanya – Germany
by Osman Şahin and Ayşegül Kebabcı

Bir zamanlar bizim iken o diyar
Şimdi gurbet oldu bize Almanya
Neslim vuslat için yılları sayar
Yakındır döneriz öze Almanya

While once this land belonged to us
Now Germany became a place of gurbet for us
My generation is countion the years until the final union
It is close, soon we will return to our origins Germany

Almanya derdini ah bir okusam
Hüznü söze döküp kalbe dokusam
Kurtulmaktır senden gayretim tasam
Güze olmaz ise yaza Almanya

If I could express my sorrows with Germany
If I could put the sadness and explain it to my heart
My goal and effort is to be freed from you
If not this fall, then in the summer Germany

Çok çileler çekti sende insanım
Anlaşamyorduk yoktu lisanım
Artuk hem dil hem fen, bilir Hasanım
Şükür ki yetiştik size Almanya

My people suffered a lot under you
We could not understand each other, because I did not speak the language
Now my Hasan knows the language as well as the sciences
Thankfully we have caught up with you Germany

Sosyal teknoloji coştu derinden
Türkler ilerledi kalktı yerinden
Pay sırası bizde dünya kârından
Akillanıp geldin dize Almanya

Social technology advanced a lot
The Turks progressed and finally are moving
Now it is our turn to get something from the world’s profit
You finally turned wise and bowed down Germany

Yaşlıydı nüfusun muhtaç'tın bize
Nazar değdi şimdi gelmişsin göze
Duydum ki bu ara düşmüşün krize
Yetiştik sendeki hızı Almanya

Your population was old, so you were in need of us
The evil eye now caught you
Recently I have heard you fall into economic crisis
We have now arrived at your speed Germany

Gün geldi Almanya sayın döküldü
Yaşlılar çoğaldı boynun büküldü
Krize dem vurdun ilmek söküldü
Muhtaçsın bizdeki toza Almanya

The day has arrived Germany, your numbers are falling down
Your elderly increased, your head went down
You are constantly talking about the crisis
You are in need of our soil/dust Germany

Ekmek verdin ama, sevmedin tür’üm
Çok uğraştın sağlam çıktı kültürüm
Süründüysek bile biz sürüm sürüm
İstemedik senden vize Almanya

You gave us bread, but you did not love my kind
You tried a lot, but my culture came out ever stronger
Even if we suffered a lot
We did not ask for a visa from you Germany

Türk kuşağı ile şahi kurmuşun
Ezdin ezilmedin bizi vurmuşun
Yetmez gibi yola seddi kurmuşun
Şimdi gel bizdeki ize Almanya

With the Turkish generation you build up a kingdom
You were not oppressed but you oppressed and beat us
If that was not enough you build also a wall on the street
Now follow our footsteps Germany
Keep your religion and your culture to yourself
I do not want this gurbet to be any longer
Any benefit which comes from you, should be left aside
You are very spoiled Germany

Bu gurbet bu hasret yetsin diyorum
Ayşegül bu çile bitsin diyorum
Bırak yakasını gitsin diyorum
Razıyım yürüye geze Almanya...

I say this gurbet, this yearning should be enough
I say, this suffering should end Ayşegül
Leave his neck and let him go
I am willing to go and walk Germany

Ey eski köleminiz ödeştik gayrı
Olmaz bundan böyle gurbetin hayrı
Osman der değişti bu işin seyri
Dayanmıyor yaram, tuza Almanya…

Oh our former slave, now we are equal
From now on, there can be no good in gurbet
Osman says that now things have turned around
My wound, my salt cannot bear it anymore Germany
**Almanya – Germany**
by Ozan Yıldız

Bir ömür tükettim gurbet ellerde
Olmuyor yüreğim şen Almanya’da
Arzumanım kaldı gonca güllerde
Gülmemi unuttum ben Almanya’da

*I spent a lifetime in the hands of gurbet*
*My heart cannot be joyful in Germany*
*My wishes remained in the roses*
*I forgot to laugh in Germany*

Yanıyor içimde aşkı aşkın yücesi
Düşmüyor dilimden vatan hecesi
Sabahlar olmuyor uzun geceşi
Geçmeyi bilmiyor gün Almanya’da

*In me the highest of love is burning*
*My lips never forget to express the homeland’s words*
*The nights are long, they never turn into morning*
*The days do not pass by in Germany*

Revamı gönlüme çektiğim çile
Taş ağlar derdimi getirsem dile
Ağладı gözlerim rüyada bile
Vatanımı gördüm dün Almanya’da

*Is it fair that I have to take in the pain into my heart*
*The stones will cry if I express my sorrows*
*My eyes even cried in the dreams*
*I saw my homeland yesterday in Germany*

Yardımı dokunmaz bir kula kulun
Hep çıkmaza düşer açılmaz yolun
Hele de yok ise konacak dalın
Garip kuşlar gibi dön Almanya’da

*No person helps another person*
*Your path always ends in a dead end, your way does not open*
*And if you do not have a tree to stay on*
Then return like the saddened birds in Germany

Ana yurdum bana en büyük kardır
Mutlu olmayana bu dünya dardır
Yıllardır köyüme özlemim vardır
Hasret ile çarpar can Almanya’da

My motherland is my greatest gain
For someone unhappy this world is small
For years I am longing for my village
My heart is beating full of yearning in Germany

Hekimler çaresiz içimde sıırım
Gülmenen kadere geçmiyor nazım
Kavuşmayı diler ozan yıldızım
Dostlar Türkiye’de ben Almanya’da

The doctors are helpless, my pain is inside
I cannot persuade my destiny which does not smile at me
My ozan star is longing for union
My friends are in Turkey and I am in Germany
Almanya – Germany
by Muzaffer Yavuz

Önceleri sende hevesim çoktu
Bu yüzden peşine düştüm Almanya
Türkiye'de belli bir işim yoktu
Çare diye seni seçtim Almanya.

Before, I had a deep desire for you
This is why I was after you Germany
I did not have a specific job in Turkey
As a solution I chose you Germany

Dönüşü olmayan bir yola girdim
Eksilmedi artı efkarım, derdim
Daha çok cahidim daha çok körдум
Gözlerimi açın gördüm Almanya.

I entered a path without return
My sorrows, my pain did not lessen but increased
I was very ignorant and very blind
You opened my eyes, now I see Germany

Binbir zorluklarla geldim buraya
Sevgiğimle dağılar koydun araya
Biraz durup dönecektim silaya
Kapattın yolumu kaldım Almanya.

I came here with thousands of difficulties
You put mountains between me and my loved one
I intended to stay only a little while and then eventually return home
But you closed my path, so I stayed Germany

Ayrılık zor oldu yar gelsin dedim
Ne musade ettin nede ev verdin
Bizi ayırmaktı maksatın, derdin
Nice yuvaları yaktın Almanya.

Separation was hard, I said to myself my loved one should come
But neither did you allow it, nor did you provide us a home
Your intention was to separate us, that was your concern
How many families have you teared apart Germany

Savundukları şey insan hakları
Asılları belli, belli ırkları
Ondandır belkide bizden farkları
Bize ayrımçılık yaptın Almanya.

They defend human rights
Their roots are evident, their race is obvious
Maybe this is why they are so different from us
Your treatment towards us was marked by segregation Germany

Bazları varkı nazımı nazi
Yabancı görünce gülmüyor yüzü
Bıraksalar hemen yakacak bizi
Masum insanları yaktın Almanya.

Some of them they are truly Nazis, Nazis
When they see aforeigner, they do not smile
If they would be allowed, they would burn us immediately
You burned innocent people Germany

Zorluklarla geçti ömürün fazlası
Bitmedi bir türlü derdi tasası
Bana sorarsanız sözün kısıası
Usandım elinden bıktım Almanya.

With hardship has passed most of life
Its pain and sorrow did not cease
If you ask me about the shortest statement
I have enough of you, I am done Germany
Almanya – Germany
by S/Âye

Açık vatan adını vermişler Almanya’ya
Yaşadıklarım hüsran ile hüznün zirvesi
Pişman eyledi beni geldiğime dünyaya
Ne yapayım ayrılık, kaderimin kirvesi

Painful Homeland – this is the name they have given to Germany
What I experienced is the peak of sadness and loss
It made me regret to be born into this world
What can I do – separation is my destiny

Ne aile kalmıştır ne de, sıcak bir yuva
Analar ağlar feryad u figanla sokakta
Ahalinin ahvalı, vahim kim arar deva?
Türk kanı arar isen sadece albayrakta

Neither family nor a warm home has been left
The mothers are crying with much despair on the street
The state of the people is not hopeful, who is looking for healing
If you are looking for Turkish blood, it is only on the flag

Türk kültürü küflenmiş, unutulmuş adeta
On bir sene kendimi yiyp bitirdim dertle
‘Osmanlı çınarına’ inmiş paslanmış balta
Karşılaşmadım buna üzülen tek bir fertile

Turkish culture is rotting, almost forgotten
For 11 years I have suffered with pain
The ax fell down on the ‘Ottoman tree’ and oxidized
I did not meet anyone who expressed sorrow over this

Geldiğim gün bir işçi, ol dediler olmadım
Hiç olamazdım zira; millet ziyandi ziyan
Bunun için gayretten asla geri kalmadım
Sulu sulu gözlerim, gece giryandi giryan

The day I arrived, they said become a labor worker but I refused
I could never become one because the people they suffered desperately
This is why I never gave up
My eyes full of tears, all night long full of grief

Beni ne dostum ne de güzel eşim anladı
Hepsı sırtını döndü, dünyanın zevki için
Yerdeki bu feryadım, yüce Arşta çınladı
Aks-i seda gelmedi ya Rabbi söyle niçin?

Neither my friend nor my beautiful spouse understood me
They all turned their back, for the pleasures of this world
My cries on this earth, echoed in the high heavens
Yet, I did not receive a reply, O my Lord please say why?
Almanya Acı Vatan… - Germany: The Painful Homeland
by İsmail Kurt

Dile kolay, elli sene öncesi
Göçüp geldik, memleketin ilinden.
Gurbet ele, hayat için iş için
Anlamayız, ecnebinin dilinden.

It’s easy to say it like that: 50 years ago
We arrived here from our homeland’s town
We came to gurbet, for life for work
We do not understand the language of the stranger

Geldik amma bașımızı sokacak,
Ne bir ev var ne de bir dam akacak,
Odun kömür soba yok ki yakacak,
Ders çıkardık yağmurundan yelilden.

Yes, we arrived, but we neither found
A house nor a roof
There is neither firewood nor coal to burn
Such we learned the lessons from the coming down of the rain

Dört kişilik aileydik sımsıkı
Ters yüz etti çocuklarının merakı
Bir tuhaf ki insanların ahlakı
Kara sular boşandırır belinden.

We were a family of four – tight together
The children's curiosity turned another way
The character of people can be strange
Dark waters come down on your back

Bir iş buldum fabrikanın birinde,
Dört saatlik şehrin uzak yerinde,
Zaman geçti gözlerimin ferinde,
Işık sündü çaresizlik selinden.

I found work in one of the factories
It is four hours far away from the city
Time passed in front of my eyes
The light went down because of the stream of hopelessness

Meğer zormuş gurbet elde barınmak,
Dert kederden çilelerden arınmak,
Ayazlarda ince çula sarınmak,
Kim tutar ki gariplerin elinden.

It is difficult to accommodate to gurbet
To refrain from pain, sorrow and grief
To hold on to the thin crow during the cold frost
Who will hold the hands of the strangers

Alışmadım kör zihniyet burada,
Kem gözlerle bırakırlar arada,
Canımız tez fazla çekmez darada,
Can avuttuk telefonun telinden.

I did not get used to the blind way of thinking
With jealous eyes they leave you out in nowhere
Our hearts are not eager to endure the stress
We comforted ourselves through the telephone

Zaman geçti yıllar saçak kattı,
Biz yaşalandık çocuklarsa boy attı,
Suçsuz iken bizi gören kör çattı,
Çok usandık gama haçlı kelinden.

The time passed by, the years left their white hairs
We became old, the children instead became taller
While we were innocent, those who saw us did not leave us
We have enough of the problems coming from the skinhead with the cross

Ayrılmayız biz anadan babadan,
Vazgeçmeyiz entariden abadan,
Davul zurna dansöz köçek cabadan,
Köz yandırdık sönen ateş külünden.

We will not separate ourselves from mother or father
We will not turn away from the dress and the gown
From the drum, the clarion, the belly dancer or the pocket horse
We started the grill from the finished fire ashes
Zor oyunada zar tutulan şeholmuş,
İpe sapa gelmez olmuş keş olmuş,
Bura gelen ecnebiye eş olmuş,
Medet ummuş hristiyan döllünden.

During a difficult game, the right one became six
It cannot be controlled and became a kes
The one who arrives here gets married to a foreigner
He hoped for help from a Christian (bastard?)

Biz gurbete gurbet bize yabancı,
Yıllar yılı biz yolcuyüz o hancı,
Yurdum, ülkiem yüreğimde bir sancı,
Özümüz var başının tacı vatan
Yazgımız var Almanya acı vatan.

We are foreign to gurbet, and gurbet is strange to us
For years we have been travellers and it has been the guesthouse
My homeland, my country has become a pain in my heart
We have an origin, my homeland is my crown
We have pain, Germany is the painful homeland
Almanya, Zalim Vatan – *Germany, The Oppressive Homeland*  
by Bibi

Almanya, zalim vatan, ayrıdı gelinleri genç kocalarından,  
Önce hasret başlattı sonra acılar yaşattı, ayrılanlardan,  
Kimi geldi kimi kaldı, eşlerini alanlar da oldu ama ne yazık,  
Benim çocuk zihnimde de pek çok acılar yaşattı, çok yazık...  

Germany, the oppressive homeland, separated the brides from their young husbands  
First, it caused longing and then made the separate ones suffer pain  
Some came and stayed, there were also those who brought their spouses, but sadly  
In the mind of my childhood it caused much suffering, so disappointing.

Almanya garip bir ülke, anlamak zor ama onu boş veriyorum,  
Bulunduğum zamanda bile bana etki etmiyor, boş veriyorum,  
Medeniyet batıda deniyor ama ağır işçisi benim insanlarımdı,  
Aranan zaman geçti, hepsi unutuldu, bize laf-ı güzafi kaldı...  

Germany is a strange land, it is hard to understand but I leave it aside  
Even in the time I live, it does not influence me, I gave up on it  
It is said that civilization is in the West but the hard workers were my people  
Time passed by, they were all forgotten, what remained for us were simply empty words

Şimdi elliçi yılı kutlanıyor, bence üç nesli ilgilendirir bu konu,  
Üçüncü nesil hem şanslı ve hem de kendi kültüründen koptu,  
Bir ara nesil var orada, Alman mı olacak Türk mü, o belli değil,  
Irk değil ama inanç çok önemli, onun da ne olduğunu belli değil...

Now the 50th anniversary is celebrated, to my mind this concerns all three generations  
The third generation is lucky but also drifted away from its culture  
There is a generation living in-between, will they be German or Turkish, no one knows  
Race is not important but religion is, and here it is not clear what that will be

Değişim güzeldir aslında, yer değiştirenler bunun başlangıcını,  
Oluşturmaktan, cesaretinden dolayı taktır etmek gerekir onları,  
Problem değişimde değil, gittikleri mekana her anlamda yabancı,  
Her anlamda alt yapidan uzak, kendilerine uzak bireyler olmaları...
Change is actually a good thing, those who change places are the beginnings of that
They should be applauded for their courage in beginning this transition
The problem does not lie in the change, it is the fact that they are complete strangers to the place
They are estranged from all foundations, and are alienated from themselves

Almanya, zalim mekan, aldın eşleri birbirinden, acılar yaşattın,
Şimdi unutuldu hepsi, üçüncü nesil Alman oldu, nerede inancın?
Bunları tartışmak harçım değil elbette, öylesine konuşuyorum,
Sonrasında neler yaşanacağını da biliyorum ama susuyorum...

Germany, you oppressive place, you separated the couples from each other and caused suffering
Now everything is forgotten, the third generation became German, where is your faith
To debate these issues is certainly not my business, I am simply just talking
I also know what will be experienced afterwards, but I am silent...
Almanya Seni Sevmiyorum – Germany, I do not love you
by Şair Fevza

Gurbet sen ne zalimsin,
Beni benden edensin,
Seninde dertten başı n yensin,
ALMANYA SENI SEVMIYORUM,

Gurbet, you are so cruel
You took me away from myself
I wish that also your head will be eaten by sorrows
Germany, I do not love you.

Benim vatanım değilsin,
Sen benden ne isterisin,
Seninde kiymet günün gelsin,
ALMANYA SENI SEVMIYORUM,

You are not my homeland
What do you want from me
I wish that judgment day comes upon you
Germany, I do not love you

Ben TÜRK doğdum TÜRK ölürüm,
Birtek kitap KURANI bilirim,
ELHAMDÜLILLAH müslünün derim,
ALMANYA SENI SEVMIYORUM,

I was born a Turk and will die as a Turk
I only know of one book – the Qur’an
Praise be to God, I am a Muslim
Germany, I do not love you

Ne yapsanda çeviremezsin,
Dinime yobazlık dersin,
Sen kendini ne zannedersin,
ALMANYA SENI SEVMIYORUM,
Whatever you try, you cannot turn me around
You say my religion is backward
Who do you think you are
Germany, I do not love you

Silada bıraktım ailemi,
Abla kardeş ninemi,
Bağındaki bülbülleri, gülleri,
ALMANYA SENİ SEVMIYORUM

I left my family in the homeland
My elder sister, my brother and grandmother
The nightingale in my garden, and the roses
Germany, I do not love you
Almanya – Germany
by Yaşar Yön

Güneş vurmaz dağlardan,
Ekşi olur üzüm bağlarından,
Soğukluk var kanlarından,
Nasıl seveyim seni Almanya?

The sun does not shine from above its mountains
The grapes from its vineyard are sour
They are coldtempered
How can I love Germany?

Hep bulanık aydınlık olmuyor,
Güneş batarken görülmiyor?
Yazı kişi bilinmiyor,
Nasıl seveyim seni Almanya?

It is always cloudy and never bright
The sun does not appear when it goes down
You cannot differentiate the winter from the summer
How can I love you Germany?

Yaz kiş Yeşil’le büరünürsün,
Yabancılara hoş görürsün,
Sana geleni çürütürsün,
Nasıl seveyim seni Almanya?

Summer and winter you are draped in green
To strangers you look welcoming
Those who come to you, you are rottening
How can I love you Germany?

Kimini ayırdın nazlı eşine,
Kimini çürltünün kendi, işinde,
Kimini süründürdün peşinden,
Nasıl seveyim seni Almanya?
Some you have separated from their lovely spouse
Some you have caused suffering by your own works
Some you have dragged behind you
How can I love you Germany?

Kimi elinden kimi etin dilinden,
Kimi sakat ettin belinden,
Kimi çıkardın yolundan,
Nasil seveyim seni Almanya?

Some hands, some flesh you have destroyed
Some you have disabled their backs
Some you have led to a wrong path
How can I love you Germany?

Kimi kalmamış beş parası,
Kimi sürer zevki sefası,
Kimin dağıldı yurdu yuvası,
Nasil seveyim seni Almanya?

Some do not have left any money
Some live joyfully
Some have lost their homes and families
How can I love you Germany?

Dünya'ya gelirsem bir daha ,
Almanya liman olsa, bende gemi,
Uğrarsam semtine vursunlar beni,
Nasil seveyim seni Almanya?

If I come to this world again
If Germany would be a haven and I a ship
If I ever come near to your area, they should shot me
How can I love you Germany?
Almanya – Germany
by Mehmet Talip Bilgil

Ah Almanya bacımı aldın, ağами aldın.
İmarında kullandan emeklerini.
Kullandan kullandan attın, işe yaramaz diye,
Garibimi, hastalığa attın boşluğa.

Oh Germany, you took away my sister, you took away my brother
You exploited their strength for your development
You used them, abused them and discarded them eventually because, thinking they are of no use
You threwed my poor ones into sickness, into emptiness

Sıla hasreti yaşattın onlara,
Türküler yaktırdın, ağtlar düzdürdün.
Duygularını aldın, kör ettin,
Garibimi emekli ettin, attın sokağa.

You made them experience the longing for the homeland
You made them compose songs, made them create mournful music
You took away their emotions, blinded them
You made my poor ones retire and have thrown them onto the street

Evlatalarına ikinci muamelesi yaptın,
Avrupalı gelince ayağa kalktınl.
Başını açtınl, boynuna haç taktın,
Garibimi kulludadın, attın sokağa.

Their children you have treated like second class citizen
For the European, however, you stood up
You took of their scarves, and hanged the cross around their necks
You abused my poor ones, and kicked them onto the street

Ellerine bir dilim ekmek verdin,
Duygularını çaldın, umutlarını çaldın.
Ötekiler yaptn, güzel davranışları yıktın,
Garibimi kulludadın, attın sokağa.
Into their hands you gave them a piece of bread
You stole their feelings, you stole their hopes
You made them the “others”, and destroyed their good behaviors
You exploited my poor ones, and put them on the streets
Almanıyı severmedim – I could not love Germany
by Aşık Erdem Can

Gurbetin çilesi varmış
Ben kalmayı severmedim
Vatandan ayrılmak zormuş
Almanıyı severmedim

Gurbet causes suffering
I could not love staying here
It is hard to leave your homeland
I could not love Germany

Ayrılık ölümden beter
Kismet ülke ülke atar
Türkiye gözümde tüter
Fransayı severmedim

Separation is worst than death
My destiny is to go from country to country
I am longing for my Turkey
I could not love France

İsviçrede çektim kahir
Sanki göz yaşlarım nehir
Günümüz zindan gecem zehir
Hollandayı severmedim

In Switzerland I suffered a lot
As if my tears were rivers
My days feel like being in prison, my nights feel like being imprisoned
I could not love the Netherlands

Erdem can’da bin bir tasa
Belçikada düşmüş yasa
Hasret kaldım ben sıvaza
Viyanayı severmedim.
The life of Erdem has thousands of concerns
In Belgium I felt into grief
I am yearning for my Sivas
I could not love Vienna
Almanya Acı Vatan – Germany, Painful Homeland
by Talat Özgen

Almanya acı vatan
Hayalleri kıvıran
Bir avuç umut için
Döküldü onca insan

Germany, painful homeland
The one which messes with your dreams
For a handful of hope
Flow a mass of people

Durdular el, pençe
El kapısının eşğinde
Oldu bu ğururlara
Ruhi bir işkence, kelepçe

They gathered their hands folded and waiting
In front of the doors of the host
For these prideful souls
This was an emotional torture, being like handcuffed

Kazanılan servetler
Değişen zaman, değerler
Farkına bile varmadan
Yabancı olup gittiler, bittiler

All the material wealth that was gained
The changing time, the values
Without even noticing
They turned into strangers and ceased to be

Bir arada bir derede
Hep arayışlar içerisinde
Bilmediler, bilinmediler
Seyirci kaldilar dillerde
Altogether at one place
Constantly being in search
They did not know, they were not known
In the talks, they remained observers in the

Germany, the painful homeland
From the outside it looks sweet
If they were able to turn back time
They would turn us away from their doors
Almanya – Germany
by Melih Çiloğlu

Bilmem rüyamıydı, yaşamım benim
Ne oldu gençliğim, nettin Almanya
Koç yiğitler gibi, gelmiştim sana
Sarartın, gül benzim soldu Almanya

I don’t know, was my life a dream?
What happened to my youth, what have you done Germany?
I came to you like a heroic bull
But you allowed me to rot, to wither away Germany

Ne ümitle geldim, bilmezsin sana
Murad aldırmadın, düşürdün dara
Divane eyledin, saldın yollara
Yollarımı şaştın, zalim Almanya

You don’t know with which kind of hopes I came to you
You didn’t consider my wishes, you let me fall into hardship
You made me insane, and sent me on the street
You confused me about my path, oppressive Germany

Yurdumu yuvamı, viran eyledin
Değer kiymet idim, pula peyledin
Rast gele soysuza, köle eyledin
Ver benim gençliğim, gidem Almanya

You ruined my homeland, my home
I had value and worth, but you sold me like a cheap stamp
In a capricious way, you enslaved me to anyone
Give me back my youth, I want to go Germany

Özledim köyümün, ayran aşını
Kayıp ettim, yarenimi eşimi
Nolur, yalvarırım bırak peşimi
Huzur bırakmadın, bende Almanya

I miss my village’s yogurt drink
I lost my loved one, my spouse
Please, I beg you, leave me alone
You didn’t leave any comfort in my heart Germany

Değerler var idi, kimse bilmedi
Aktı gözyaşlarım, silen olmadı
Dürüstleri, asla kimse görmedi
Harcadin kıymetim, zalim Almanya

There were values no one understood
My tears were flowing, but no one wiped them away
Upright people were never seen
You wasted my worth, oppressive Germany

Hep sende gösterdin, türlü insanı
Benliğin var ise, tanı o canlı
Hasretinde koydun güzel vatanı
 Özledim yurdumu, gidem Almanya

You always showed the diversity of people
If you have any personality, then know this life
In yearnind did you put the beautiful homeland
I miss my homeland, I want to go Germany

Benlik bırakmadın, ben olanlarda
Canlık göstermedin, can olanlarda
Dostlukları yıktın, dost olanlarda
Yad yaban oldular, sende Almanya

You didn’t leave personhood in those who are persons
You didn’t show life, to those who have life
You destroyed friendships of those who were friends
They became strangers to each other, Germany

Ne yurdu düşündün, nede kucağı
Tarumar eyledin, mutlu ocağı
Viraneye döndü, yaşamin çağı
Baykuslar öttürdün, sende Almanya

Neither did you think of the homeland, nor the loving arms
You destroyed the happy home
The life of this age resembles ruins
You let owls sing at your place Germany
Aile bağları, hepten yok oldu
O sıcak sevgiler, buzdağın buldu
Yaşattın üzünler muhabbet noldu
Ararsan bulunmaz, yoktur Almanya

Family ties completely vanished
The warm love turned into a mountain of ice
You made everyone experience sadness, what happened to love
If you were to look for it, there is none Germany

Ne merhamet kalmış, nede din iman
MELİH, kimselere eyleme güman
Gaddarlıklarına, derim el aman
Canlar yaktın, kül eyledin Almanya

Neither compassion is left nor religion or faith
Melih, don’t complain to anyone
To their grims, I only say “oh help”
You burned lives, made them into ashes Germany
Almanya’ya Küskünüm – I am angry with Germany
by Adnan Şahin

Aldın da gençliğimi heder eyledin
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün
Her zaman yüzüme dertli söylediğin
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

You took away my youth and wasted it
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry
All the time you created sorrows on my face
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Nice akrabalarım görmeden gitti
Nicesinin de gurbette ömrü bitti
En güzel yıllarım buralar da yitti
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

So many relatives have left without me seeing them
And many more ended their lives in gurbet
My most beautiful years were destroyed here
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Hans komşum oldu zıvayını öğretti
Hayat bana ihlibedih’i de belletti
Yıllar sonra yabancı müzik söylediğin
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

Hans became my neighbor, and taught me the swine
Life also taught me “Ich liebe Dich”
Years later it made me sing foreign songs
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Erkeklerde burda kadına benzer
Gece farklı gündüzde farklı gezer
İnsan insanlığından bazen bezer
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

The men here resemble women
In the nights they walk differently, during the day they walk differently
As a human being, sometimes you have enough from your humanness
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Örfün ayrı tören, yörende ayrı
Burda yaşayanlar hep ayrı gayrı
Göremedim bende sende bir hayrı
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

Your customs are different, your traditions and habits are different
Those who live here are separate and different
I didn’t see any good coming out from you
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Adnan’ım vihaystu dersen bana
Almanca bilirim de demem sana
Ölürsem bedenim ülkemde kala
Almanya sana küskünüm küskün

My Adnan, if you ask me „Wie heisst Du?“
I know German, but I wouldn’t tell you
If I die, my body should remain in my home country
Germany, I am angry with you, so angry

Almanya ülkesine iten sebepler
Ekonomimizi alt üst edenler
Bizi gavur yola işe dizenler
Almanya’ya değil, onlara küstüm

The reasons why people were pushed towards Germany
Are those who mismanaged our economy
Those who put us to work for the disbelievers
Not with Germany, but I am angry with them
Almanya Bir Altın Kafes – *Germany, the Golden Cage*
by Kübra Yüksel

Tek başına kalmışım burda,
Kimse gelip halimi sormaz.
Almanya bir altın kafes,
Ben ise bir bülbül,
kafese hapsetmişler beni,
Ne bayram bilirim ne seyran.

*Just by myself am I here*
*No one comes and asks me about my condition*
*Germany is a golden cage*
*And I am a nightingale*
*They locked me up in a cage*
*I don’t know any happy occasion or celebration*

Ekmek paraşı diye ayrılmışım ben,
Anamdan, babamdan, vatanımdan!
Ne bir günüm geçer,
Nede bir saatim.
Tek başına kalmışım ben burda.

*To earn my daily bread, I separated*
*From my mother, my father, my homeland*
*Not one of my days is passing*
*Or even an hour*
*I am left here by myself*

Burnumda tüter vatanım, bayrağım.
Toprağımı özledim ben.
Dışarda hasret özlem var,
Yüreğimdeki ateş ise sönmez.
Kalmışım ben burda,
kimse halimi sormaz.
I miss my homeland, my flag
I missed my soil
Outside, there is a yearning and a longing
The fire in my heart however does not burn out
I am left here
No one asks about my condition

Almanya Hükümeti Kalk Ayağa – Suçlusun
By Hasan Sancak

German Government Stand Up – You are guilty

Yangınlar devam eder - başlamıştır ölümler
Kara toprağa düşer - Âdem Ahmet Gulumler
Yetkili aranıyor - hak hukuk savunacak
Hangi alçak yaptıysa - sallandırılmalı bacak

The fires are continuing – the deaths are beginning
The fall onto the dark soil – the Adems, Ahmets, the Gulum
The responsible ones are to be looked for – justice and rights need to be defended
Whichever evil person did it – he will be hanged on his feet

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Tehlikeli gelişme - derhal önlenmelidir
Tedbiri alınmazsa - ortalara çıkar kir
Hani çağdaş demokrat - süğünma arkasına
Kahpelik sergilersin - acı dolar vatana

A dangerous development – it needs to be stopped immediately
If precautions are not taken care of – the filth will appear on the surface
That modern democrat –you cannot protect yourself behind him
You display immorality – the painful homeland of money

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa-suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun
German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

O Almanya’nın Dortmund-Hagen denen şehrinde
17 Şubat günü - sıktıramız derinde
Polis karakolunda - işkencenin sonucu
Beden toprağa düştü - bize dokundu ucu

In the so-called German city of Dortmund Hagen
The 17th of February – our pain lies deep
At the police station – as the result of torture
The body fell onto soil – the case was associated with us

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adam Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Hastaneye bıraktın - ağır yaralı iken
Her şeyi savsakların - tedbir al vakit varken
İşkencenin sonucu - hep burnunu kırdınız
Elleri arkasında - vurdukça da vurdunuz

You dropped him off at the hospital – when he was severely wounded
You are delaying everything – take precautions as long as you have time
As a result of torture – you broke his nose
His hands were tied behind – and you beat him continously

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Boğularak ölüme - sebep olan bir durum
Sesimi duyan var mı - ona olacak sorum
Yasaklanan işkence - Türk’e reva gördünüz
Planları kurarak - çorapları ördünüz
Strangled to death – that was the reason of his condition
Does anyone hear my voice – to him is my question
The forbidden torture – you applied to the Turk
You prepared your plans – you made your socks

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa-suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü-nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

There is no explanation – death by torture
It is written on your foreheads – a chapter which is not finished
They are filled with hatred towards you – the son of the Turkish Muslim

Cruelty is the only word for this – don’t stay silent my fellow citizen
The answer needs to be given – tears flow from our eyes
If it is Adem today – tomorrow it can come to you
It needs to come to an end – this awful crisis

German government stand up – you are guilty

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Adem Ozdamar is dead – you are filled with hatred

The lessons of human rights – you were teaching to us
Killing without honor – what shall I say to you
Hey German media – don’t even dare to write five lines
You don’t throw it out from the frontpage – you need forty lines

Almanya Hüküметi kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Adem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Everyone should be in charge – those with authority and those without
They should be held accountable – tie the hands immediately
Entering jail because of rape – for the tourist they acted
The prime minister acted – it is not that we don’t know

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Adem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

To the blind minds – Germany is addressing itself
On one side the fires – no religion, no shame does exist
Woe to you – to the ones who are ruling
My beloved fellow citizen – whom they drag to the ground

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Bulun bulun suç bulun - esrar eroin deyin
Yüklersiniz her şeyi - çünkü sizde yok beyin
Bu bir ırkçı saldırı - Naziler sizden çıkar
Bismilsiz olur ise - İşte böyle can yakar

Find find, try to assign a guilt – say drugs, say heroin
With everything you burden –because you are brainless
This is a race crime – Nazis are coming from among you
If there is no basmala – lives will be burnedlikt that

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun

German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Ozdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Bassağlığı dilerim - ailem Özdamar’a
Siz orda ağlar iken - kalbimde çıktı yara
Hasan Sancak lanetler - der ayip size yeter
Nasıl acı çekersek - bizlerden olan beter

I offer my condolences – to my family Ozdamar
While you are crying over there – a wound appeared in my heart
Hasan Sancak curses on you – he says, shame on you it’s enough
We are suffering in pain – we wish you the worst

Almanya Hükümeti kalk ayağa - suçlusun
Âdem Özdamar öldü - nefret ile dolusun
German government stand up – you are guilty
Adem Özdamar died – you are filled with hatred

Almanya’da Yangınlar – Birbirini İzliyor
Savcılar ve Hâkimler – Yapanları Gizliyor
by Hasan Sancak

In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators

My words are to the ones in authority – it is not time to sleep
Take care of your people – be aware of the realities
The aim are the Turks – the skinheads are burning and destroying
In trying to distract us – they are parasites

Almanya’da yangınlar - birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators

Don’t hide under a blanket – reveal the truth
We need to deal with – those who are playing with the fire
If they are not punished – even greater deaths
Will fall onto the dark soil – the Cihans Bogacs Gülümler

Almanya’da yangınlar-birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators
Doğru dürüst açıkla - Almanya adaleti
Sağlanmanız gerekiş - orada adaleti
Kendi ırkından deyip - sapmayı yanlışlığa
Açıkları tattırma - yaşayan bütün sağa

*Reveal it openly and truthfully – German justice
You have to preserve it – the justice here
From your own race – don’t fall into falsehood
Don’t make the pain taste – to the whole healthy ones*

Almanya’da yangınlar - birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

*In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators*

Nerede istihbarat - eller cebe girmesin
Oradaki çakallar - Türk’e zarar vermesin
Savcılıktan izin al - başlarını bir dinle
Canım orda yitmesin - şu işleri frenle

*Where is the secret service – they shouldn’t put their hands into their pockets
Those evil ones – shouldn’t harm the Turk
Get permission from the judge – listen to the leaders
My life shouldn’t end there – stop these actions*

Almanya’da yangınlar - birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

*In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators*

Hani Türk dernekleri - gelmeli bir araya
Gücüünü göstermeli - merhem olun yaraya
Uyumaya hiç gelmez - uyuma mışıl mışıl
Medyanın önüne git - ses verin ıslı ıslı

*Where are the Turkish organizations – they should unite
They should show their strength – heal the wounds
It’s not the time to sleep – don’t sleep hard and sound
Stand in front of the media – express some noise loud and clear*
Almanya’da yangınlар - birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators

Önlenemezse yangınlar - yok olur çoğу canlar
Sizlere emanettir - Türk’üm diyen insanlar
Öğretmen Hasan söyler - yazıyor gerçekleri
Tutuşturma diyorum - beden ve etekleri

If the fires will not be prevented – many lives will be destroyed
They are entrusted to you – those people who call themselves Turk
The teacher Hasan talks – writes the truth
Don’t hold on – the bodies and the skirts

Almanya’da yangınlar - birbirini izliyor
Savcılar ve hâkimler - yapanları gizliyor

In Germany the Fires – Follow One After Another
The Lawyers and the Judges – Hide the Perpetrators
Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı
Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı
by Hasan Sancak

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship
They need to be tied – those barking crowd

Almanya diğer yerde - insanlarımız yanıyor
Türk Milleti topluca - yanaları anıyor
Aynı aileizden - hepsi de dokuz kişi
Alçakça yakılarak - Alman yaptığı bu işi

Germany, at one place – my people are burning
The Turkish people – are altogether mourning the dead
From our same family – all of them nine people
They were burnt in the cruelest way – the German committed this act

Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı
Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship
They need to be tied – those barking crowd

Derhal önlem almalı - o Almanya Devleti
Ortadan kaldırmalı - sıkıntıyi illeti
Daha biri bitmeden - öbürü başlamakta
Dumanı ve işleri - canları haslamakta

Precautions need to be taken – from the German country
It needs to be removed – the pain, the burden
Before one is finished – another one is starting
The smoke all of it – is burning the lives

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Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship
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Elektrik kontağı - külaha anlatın
Yakala ve sorgula - yere doğru fırlatın
Uyumaya hiçbir gelmez - uyursak horul horul
Anne baba hanımı - bırakırız bilin dul

An electrical fire – are you fooling me
Catch and ask – and throw them onto the ground
We shouldn’t sleep – it’s not the time of sleep
Otherwise mother father spouse- we will leave as widows, so you know

Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı
Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship
They need to be tied – those barking crowd

3,5 milyon kişi - Almanya’da arkadaş
Hepsinin gözlerinden - akıktır bilin yaş
Tahriklerle kapılma - fakat sesini yükselt
Meydanı boş bırakma - şiirim size davet

3.5 million people – are in Germany oh friend
From all their eyers – are flowing tears, so you know
Don’t be provoked – but raise your voice
Don’t leave the square – my poem is an invitation to you

Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı
Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship
They need to be tied – those barking crowd

Kalk ayağa Türkiye - caddelere meydana
Şerefsizler kıymasın - ne cana ne insana
Tanımadm etmedim - deme ilgilendirmez
Davranmak gerekiyor - destek vermek gerek tez

Stand up, oh Turkey – enter the streets, the squares
Those without honor should not dare – to attack any life or person
Don’t say I don’t know them – don’t say I don’t care
You need to take action – support is needed immediately

Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı
In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship  
They need to be tied – those barking crowd

Don’t cover it up – those criminals need to face punishment  
Those creatures – need to suffer in its fullest  
The teacher Hasan is expressing – to all dead his condolences  
To another place they are moving – protect all those alive

Almanya’da Dazlaklar - gemi aldı azıyı  
Bağlamak gerekiyor - havlayan o tazıyı

In Germany the Skinheads – are taking over the ship  
They need to be tied – those barking crowd
Almanya Mektubu – A Letter from Germany
by Bedirhan Gökçe

Mektubun yenice geçti elime,
Selamını duymak yeteyo gardaş,
Dağ başı bi çaruk esküttüğümüz,
Boz dağlar gözümde tüteyo gardaş.

Your letter only arrived now
To receive greetings from you is enough my brother
Those days on the mountains...
Those mountains I now miss dearly my brother

Gardaş, Hambırgın yolları asfalt,
Adamların kafaları sıfır nimara tıraşlı,
Afyon içiciler, itle, manyakla,
Turken raus, Turken raus diye bağıryorlar.

Brother, Hamburg’s streets are with asphalt
Their heads are bald like zero
They smoke hashish, like crazy, like idiots
They scream “Get out Turks, Get out Turks”

Heh...Ulen noldu da değişti devran.
Çok deel,
Yirmibeş otuç yıl önce bizi bandoynan karşılıdilar,
Bunca yıl gavurun pisliğiynen uğraş,
Sonra sana düşman gibi baksınlar,
Ataş verip, düneğini yaksınlar,
Adamanın ağarına gidiyor gardaş.

Hmm, I wonder what happened that attitudes have changed
It was not long ago
Twenty-five or thirty years ago they welcomed us with suits
All these years we dealt with the filth of these infidels
And at the end they stood up like enemies against us
They burn down houses and families
It really pains a person brother

Gardaş, vakti geçmiş Alamanyanın,
İrecebe söle, havas itmesin,
İneğini, dansını neyin satmasın,
Gavurun paraşı kıymetli emme,
İliğini sömürüyo adamın.

Brother, Germany’s time has long passed
Tell Recep, he shouldn’t be so eager
He shouldn’t sell his cow and sheep
They burn you out here

Kel Musanın Abdıllayı bildin mi?
Böyük kız gavura kaçtı diyolar,
Adı Hans mıymış neymiş,
Sarı bir oğlan.
Abdilla düştükçe düştü diyolar.

Do you remember bald Musa’s Abdullah?
His eldest daughter ran away with an infidel
His name is Hans or so
A blonde guy
Abdullah is devastated and full of despair

Hayat bu gavırın sürdüğü hayat.
Bizimkisi gün tüketmek neydecen.
Onlar gibi yaşamaya kaktın mı,
Kendinden öteye düşünmeyecen.

Life is what the infidel leads as life
Ours is simply wasting the day
If you try to live like them
You have to only think of your own self

Bizim pavlikada bir alman var. Glaus,
Çok eyi gardaşım olsun.
Bazı iç çikışı bize geleyyo,
Yemek sarımsaklıya yemeyyo.
Yemekte sarımsak olmaz mı gardaş?

In our factory there is a German. Klaus
He became a good brother of mine
Sometimes he comes to us after work
If the food contains garlick he doesn’t eat it
How can there be no garlick in food?

Bazı gıcık almanlar çkeyyo,
Sırtını döneyyo, burun bükeyyo,
Diyo hör Türk, siz çok kö tü kokeyyo,
Çöpçü... Gül kokacak değil ya garda...

Some weird Germans appear
They turn their backs, and have their nose in the air
They say you Turk listen, you smell awful
The cleaning man, why should he smell like roses

Bu Almanlar çok acayip bir millet,
Yere tüketene bağıryorla,
Heh... Yetmeyyo, polizay çağırıyo,
Adamın gülesi geleyyo...

These German are a very strange people
They yell at those who spit on the floor
As if that’s not enough, they call the police
A man can only laugh at this

Gardaş, bir mercedes aldım, kırmızı,
Gayri tuflate yayman gitme yok,
Çatlasın elleme mihtarın kızı,
Eee...
Başı göğe erdi gedesalihle evlendi de haspam.
Er yerine gomazdı bizi,

Brother, I bought a Meredes, a red one
Even to the toilet I don’t go walking anymore
The major’s daughter should be jealous
Sooo...
She was arrogant and went to marry Salih
She didn’t take us serious

Orda ne va, ne yok,
 Havalar nasıl
Ekinler, koyunlar, kuzular nasıl?
Sen nasılın Muhammed, Fadime nasıl?
Selamı selama eklerim gardaş,
Tell me, what’s going on there?  
How is the weather?  
How are the fields, the cows and the sheeps?  
How are you Muhammed? How is Fadime?  
I sent you my greetings  
And await your fast response my brother

**Almanya – Germany**  
Suphi Çapacı

It called us to itself and said “work”  
This is not a Layla and Majnun fairy tale  
Far from the homeland, the wound is severe  
It separated us from ourselves and our loved ones  
Why are we here, why?  
We couldn’t even enjoy what we have earned  
Now I understand that we came here for a house, but we will return with a coffin to our homeland
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