

## DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

## From Juz' 20: Perpetual Night-Perpetual Day

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِضِيَاءٍ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ  
قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ  
أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Say, ‘Tell me, if Allah were to make the night perpetual for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allah can bring you light? Will you not listen?’ Say, ‘Tell me, if Allah were to make the day perpetual for you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allah can bring you night wherein you can rest? Will you not perceive?’ He has made for you the night and the day out of His mercy, so that you may rest therein and that you may seek His bounty and so that you may give thanks. (Qaṣaṣ 28:71-73)

**Reflections:**

One of the benefits of having other planets and natural satellites close enough to our planet is that it allows us to imagine various possibilities on earth based on what we find elsewhere. The closest celestial body to us is the moon. One of the interesting things about the moon is that we always see the same face of the moon. This is not because the moon does not rotate on its axis; rather, it just happens to rotate at exactly the same rate as it orbits the earth—i.e., one revolution just over every 27 earth days. This is called synchronous rotation where its day is just as long as its year.

In the same way, if our earth rotated on its axis at exactly the same rate as it orbits the sun—i.e., if it took 365 days to rotate on its axis as opposed to the 24 hours we are used to—one side of the earth would always face the sun and the other would always be in darkness. We would have perpetual day on half the earth and perpetual night on the other half. No alternation. The day side could get extremely hot, perhaps hot enough to evaporate the oceans. The night side could plunge into deep cold, possibly cold enough to freeze the atmosphere. In either case, life would be either unbearable or impossible.

Allah (swt) brings up the alternation of the day and light as a sign to reflect over.<sup>1</sup> From the Qur’ānic standpoint, the day is meant to seek one’s livelihood while the night is meant for rest. Having a perpetual day would imply difficulty getting rest; having a perpetual night would imply difficulty finding sustenance. The alternation, therefore, allows for both tasks, along with a host of other benefits. Those who can hear the truth (“Will you not listen?”) or see the facts (“Will you not perceive?”) are best able to appreciate the alternation and hence show gratitude to Allah for it (“so that you may give thanks”).

When we become accustomed to a phenomenological pattern, we take it for granted. Most of us take the day and night for granted. One of the times when we begin to appreciate the distinction between day and night is during the month of Ramaḍān. Fasting during the daylight hours gives us a heightened sense of this distinction, often right down to the minute!

One of the other benefits of this month is that it disrupts our normal patterns, sometimes leading to a type of “inversion.” Whereas the day was a time of finding physical sustenance, our staying away from food during the day allows us to “rest” that aspect of us. Whereas the night was a time of physical rest, our staying up in *‘ibādah* allows us to seek out our spiritual “sustenance” during the night and enliven it in the process. It was on the Night of Qadr, after all, when the revelatory sustenance of the Qur’ān descended from Above. May Allah grant us *idrāk* (comprehension) of this blessed night.

**To ponder:** How has the advent of artificial light changed our perception of day and night?