

Fast 12: Holy Prophet attained the highest position of sinlessness and knowledge of God, and the closest position to God and to humanity

“¹By the star when it sets! ²Your companion (the Prophet) is not in error, nor does he deviate. ³Nor does he speak out of desire. ⁴It is nothing but revelation that is revealed — ⁵One Mighty in power has taught him, ⁶the Lord of strength. So he attained to perfection, ⁷and he is in the highest part of the horizon. ⁸Then he drew near, drew nearer yet, ⁹so he was the measure of two bows or closer still. ¹⁰So He revealed to His servant what He revealed.” —53: 1–10

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ ۖ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا
غَوَىٰ ۚ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ
يُّوحَىٰ ۚ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ ۖ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ
ۖ وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ۚ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ ۖ فَكَانَ
قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ ۚ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ
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Verse 1. In the **setting of the star** the opponents of the Holy Prophet are warned of the calamities which would soon overtake them; their star of fortune was about to set. But the words “By the star when it sets!” may also be translated as: “By portions of the Quran that are revealed!” From this point of view, the meaning is that every portion of the Quran when it is revealed is an evidence that the Prophet is not in error but in the right. Every portion of the Quran by itself gives evidence that it is the Truth.

Verse 2. By *your companion* is meant *the Prophet*, who had led among these very people a life of unblemished purity. There are two statements made here. In the first it is denied that he is in error, and this means that he had true knowledge or that he was not mistaken in his *teachings*. In the second, any *deviation* from the right course is denied, and this shows that he acted according to that knowledge and that his practice was according to the principles that he was teaching. This verse is a conclusive proof that according to the Quran the Holy Prophet was perfectly sinless.

Verse 3–4. “Nor does he speak out of desire. It is nothing but revelation that is revealed”. The Quran was not his word, for he spoke not of his own desire; it was the word of God, all of it, entirely. There are numerous reasons which prove that the revelation to the Holy Prophet was not the outcome of his desires as a human being. For example, the revelation “Say: I ask of you no reward for it except that whoever wishes may take a way to his Lord” (25:57) could not be the outcome of his own desire.

Verse 5. “One Mighty in power” is God Who taught him the Quran. It is clearly stated at another place in the Quran that “The Beneficent taught the Quran” (55:1–2).

Verse 6. The Holy Prophet is spoken of here as having **attained to perfection** because the God Himself was his Teacher. The word used for “perfection” here,

astawā, also means being upright, stable, balanced, in the middle, and not inclining to either extreme. The Holy Prophet in his behaviour never went away from the middle, neither doing something too much nor doing it too little. Verse 2 stated that he was “not in error”. That is the negative aspect of the matter. It is not enough to be merely “not in error”. Here the positive aspect is mentioned, that he had perfect morals.

Verse 7. “he is in the highest part of the horizon”. The Prophet’s being in **the highest part of the horizon** refers to the brilliance of his light which was to illuminate all corners of the world. This is a prophecy that he will shine out in the full brilliance of his light like the midday sun. This chapter was revealed only around five years after he was made Prophet and Messenger by God.

Verse 8. “Then he drew near, drew nearer yet” — The common view is that “he” refers to the angel Jibreel and that this mentions that Jibreel drew nearer and nearer to the Holy Prophet. But in our opinion “he” refers to the Holy Prophet and these words mean that he drew nearer and nearer to God. The verse points out that the Prophet attained the utmost nearness to God which it is possible for a human being to attain.

Verse 9. “so he was the measure of two bows or closer still.” The expression “**measure of two bows**” indicates close union. If we take it to mean *a length* which is two bows long, then this means that the Holy Prophet was closer to God than this length of two arrows. Another meaning is derived from a pre-Islamic Arab custom. This custom was that, when two men wanted to indicate a strong bond of friendship between them, one would place his bow directly over the other’s bow, so that the bows became one, with their pull-chords next to each other. This was to symbolise that the two bows would shoot one and the same arrow, indicating the unity of the two men. So this verse can be taken to mean that the Holy Prophet and God were like these two bows, so that an arrow shot by one was also shot by the other. Both of them had the same objectives and were trying to achieve the same thing.

There is also another meaning: one bow is God and the other bow is humanity, and the Holy Prophet is the common chord of two bows. On the one hand he is close to God in serving Him. On the other hand, he is close to humanity in doing good to all people. So the two bows indicate the Holy Prophet’s twofold perfection, i.e., his nearness to God and his humility in his relations with people, his love and service of God and his love and service of humanity.

Verse 10. The wording “*what He revealed*” in the verse “So He revealed to His servant **what** He revealed” is so phrased as to indicate the greatness of the revelation which came to the Holy Prophet. He is called here the servant of God.