

Yaqīn in Allah (ﷻ): Āyat an-Nūr and the Beginning of Faith

Every journey of faith begins with Allah.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth..."

(Qur'an 24:35)

Allah introduces Himself through His own words. Among the most profound self-disclosures in all of revelation is the opening declaration of Āyat an-Nūr. The Qur'an does not introduce Him through philosophical argument, historical narrative, or scientific observation.

For more than fourteen centuries this verse has inspired reflection among the Companions, the early generations, the great mufasssirūn, theologians, jurists, and spiritual scholars. Yet before asking *what* this Light is, perhaps we should ask a simpler question:

Why did Allah choose to reveal Himself to us through the language of Light?

Light is that by which everything else becomes known. Without it, forms may exist yet remain unseen. Paths may exist yet remain unfollowed. Beauty may exist yet remain unappreciated. Light does not create reality; it reveals it.

The Qur'an repeatedly employs this imagery to teach a far greater truth: just as physical light enables vision, Divine Light enables guidance.

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ

"There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book."

(Qur'an 5:15)

كَتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

"A Book which We have revealed to you so that you may bring mankind out of the darknesses into the light by the permission of their Lord to the Path of Almighty the All Praised."

(Qur'an 14:1)

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

"It is He who sends down clear signs to His servant that He may bring you out of the darknesses into the light."

(Qur'an 57:9)

The Qur'an is remarkably consistent. Darknesses are repeatedly mentioned in the plural (*ẓulumāt*), while Light is singular (*nūr*). Classical scholars observed that falsehood appears in countless forms, whereas truth remains one. Many paths compete for the human heart, but only one leads to Allah.

Here the Qur'an itself begins to explain Āyat an-Nūr.

- Allah is the Light.
- His revelation is light.
- Faith is light.
- Guidance is light.

Everything that leads the servant to Him emerges from that singular Divine source.

Imām Ibn Kathīr explains that Allah is the Guide of the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, illuminating hearts through revelation and faith.

Al-Ṭabarī similarly understood the verse as describing Allah as the One who enlightens creation through His governance and guidance.

Al-Qurtubī gathered the earlier interpretations, affirming that every genuine form of guidance ultimately returns to Allah.

Imām al-Ghazālī, rooted in the principle that every created light derives its reality from the One who is the ultimate Light.

This raises another question.

If Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth, what would creation be without Him?

The Qur'an never says that the physical universe is devoid of created light.

وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا

“And placed therein a shining lamp”

(Qur'an 78:13)

وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا

“And the moon a reflected light”

(Qur'an 10:5)

وَعَلَّمَتِ ۖ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

“Also, by landmarks and stars do people find their way.”

(Qur'an 16:16).

Physical illumination is itself one of Allah's countless signs. Yet the Qur'an consistently teaches something deeper. Every created light is temporary. The stars will fade. The sun will be folded up. The heavens themselves will be transformed. Creation possesses no eternal light within itself because every created thing is contingent upon its Creator.

Thus, while the universe contains created lights, it possesses no eternal light of its own. Apart from Allah, there is no independent source of guidance, truth, existence, or ultimate reality.

The Qur'an illustrates this immediately after Āyat an-Nūr through one of its most striking parables:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ۚ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكْذِبْ
يَرَاهَا ۗ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ

"Or their deeds are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea, covered by waves, above which are waves, above which are clouds—darknesses, one above another. If one stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it. And whoever Allah has not granted light—for him there is no light."

(Qur'an 24:40)

The placement of these verses is extraordinary. The Qur'an first reveals the source of all light and then depicts the condition of those separated from it. The deepest darkness is therefore not the absence of sunlight but the absence of Divine guidance.

This understanding naturally leads to the foundation of all faith: **Tawhīd**.

If every form of true guidance originates from Allah alone, then worship belongs to Him alone.

The Qur'an proclaims:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

"Say: He is Allah, the One."

(Qur'an 112:1)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

"Allah! There is no deity worthy of worship except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence."

(Qur'an 2:255)

Tawhīd is therefore not merely a theological proposition. It is the inevitable conclusion reached by the heart that recognizes the true source of every light.

Yet another question remains.

If Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth, why can we not behold Him with our eyes?

The Qur'an answers through the story of Prophet Mūsā (عليه السلام).

When Musa (AS) said:

رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ

"O My Lord, show Yourself to me that I may look upon You."

(Qur'an 7:143)

Allah (SWT) replied:

لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي

"You shall not see Me. But look at the mountain; if it remains in its place, then you shall see Me."

(Qur'an 7:143)

When Allah (SWT) manifested Himself to the mountain, it crumbled, and Mūsā (AS) fell unconscious. The lesson is profound. The limitation lay not in Allah, but in creation. Finite beings cannot encompass the Infinite within the conditions of this worldly life.

The Qur'an reinforces this elsewhere:

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَصَرَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

"Vision cannot encompass Him, but He encompasses all vision. He is the Most Subtle, the All-Aware."

(Qur'an 6:103)

Modern science quietly illustrates this truth. Human sight depends upon a tiny portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. We cannot naturally perceive ultraviolet light, infrared radiation, radio waves, or countless realities that nevertheless exist. The eye itself is limited even within creation.

Science therefore does not prove revelation. Rather, it reminds us that our sensory faculties are finite. If our eyes cannot encompass every created reality, how could they encompass the Creator whose Majesty transcends creation itself?

Yet the believer is not left without hope.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Indeed, you will see your Lord just as you see this full moon, and you will have no difficulty in seeing Him."

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

The inability to behold Allah belongs to this earthly life, not to the eternal life promised to the believers.

From Tawḥīd emerges **Yaqīn**.

The Qur'an tells us that Allah showed Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَيَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِيْنَ

"Thus, We showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he would be among those possessing certainty (al-mūqinīn)."

(Qur'an 6:75)

Certainty is not blind belief. It is faith strengthened through revelation, reflection, worship, and lived experience. The Qur'an even speaks of ascending degrees of certainty:

‘ilm al-yaqīn, (102:5) عَلِمَ ٱلْيَقِيْنَ “Nay, would that you knew now with a sure knowledge.”

‘ayn al-yaqīn, (102:7) ثُمَّ لَنَرُوْنَهَا عَيْنَ ٱلْيَقِيْنَ “Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.”

ḥaqq al-yaqīn (56:95) إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ ٱلْيَقِيْنَ “Indeed, this is the absolute truth with certainty.” teaching that certainty deepens as Divine truth becomes increasingly realized in the believer's life.

The great Imāms of Islam all converged upon this reality.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah emphasized sound creed as the foundation of religion.

Imām Mālik taught that knowledge without humility bears little fruit.

Imām al-Shāfi‘ī reminded believers that genuine knowledge must lead to obedience.

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal demonstrated through his steadfastness that certainty is tested before it is perfected.

Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim wrote that faith increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience.

Imām al-Ghazālī described remembrance of Allah as how the heart becomes increasingly illuminated.

Though differing in emphasis, they spoke with one voice: true faith begins with Allah and continually returns to Him.

Our journey therefore began with a single verse:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

It concludes with a single certainty.

- Every created light is borrowed.
- Every created certainty is dependent.
- Every created existence is contingent.
- Only Allah possesses Eternal Light.

When the heart recognizes this reality, Tawḥīd ceases to be merely a doctrine and becomes the very foundation of Imān. From that foundation grows Yaqīn—a certainty that illuminates the believer's worship, transforms the character, and anchors the soul through every trial until it finally beholds the Light toward which it has journeyed all its life. Thus, the believer's certainty does not begin with creation seeking its Lord, but with the Lord who first illuminated creation and continually calls it from darknesses into His Light.

The next article will explore how Allah communicates that guidance to creation through His noble servants who neither disobey Him nor fail in His commands: **the angels**.