

# CONTEXT

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## Tools of Remembrance (*dhikr*) in the Qur'ān

*Enes Karić*

University of Sarajevo – Faculty of Islamic Studies

dreneskarić@hotmail.com  orcid.org/0009-0003-1058-3545

### Abstract

The remembrance of God (*dhikr*) is one of the Qur'ān's key themes. Words derived from the root *ayn – lām – mīm* meaning 'to know', 'to realise,' and 'to learn' are almost immediately followed by the word *dhikr* (*dhāl – kāf – rā*) in the sense of 'to remember', 'to remind', and 'to learn a lesson'. Sūrah Šād (38:1) announces the divine oath: *Wa l-Qur'āni dhī-dhikr!* ("By the Koran, containing Remembrance").<sup>1</sup> The Qur'ān refers to many concepts with words derived from the root *dh-k-r*, but the word *dhikr* is a reminder of the ultimate mysteries of God and the world, and of life and death.

**Key words:** Qur'ān, *dhikr*, man, remembrance, amazement, āyāt or divine signs, sacred history of humanity

<sup>1</sup> Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, vol. II (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 158.

## 1. Introduction: *Dhikr* and its Meanings

Words with the root *dh-k-r*, meaning ‘to remember’, ‘to take heed’, ‘to be prudent’, ‘to be clever’, ‘to be admonished’, and ‘to marvel in a sublime way’, are mentioned over two hundred times in the Qur’ān, and the thematic areas covered by *dhikr* or *dhikrā* are broad. Almost every mention of *dhikr* and its derivatives refers to God, then to the universe and nature, to man and humanity, to plants and animals, and to a morally awakened life. Instances of *dhikr* in the Qur’ān that refer to history, especially sacred history, and to the manifestations of nature are not uncommon.

In the dictionary *Mufradātu l-qur’ān*, ar-Rāḡib al-Iṣfahānī discusses *dhikr* in the context of its fundamental meanings, where *dhikr* indicates remembrance as a state or ability that the soul possesses, which enables a person to retain acquired knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Iṣfahānī believes that there is “dhikr with heart” (*dhikrun bi l-qalb*) and “dhikr with tongue” (*dhikrun bi l-lisān*).<sup>3</sup> A large number of specialist Islamic and Qur’ānic dictionaries mention *dhikr*, either identifying its meanings in the Qur’ān, or, more frequently, in terms of the meanings it has acquired throughout the history of Islam, e.g., with the emergence of dervish orders and Sūfī works, teachings, and institutions.

Brill’s Encyclopaedia of Islam defines *dhikr* as

Remembering God, reciting the names of God; the tireless repetition of an ejaculatory litany, a religious service common to all the mystical fraternities, performed either solitarily or collectively.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, British Anglican missionary Thomas Patrick Hughes (1838–1911) defines *dhikr* (or *zikr*) in terms of historical practice:

Zikr – lit. ‘Remembering’, heb. Zakhur. The religious ceremony, or act of devotion, which is practised by various religious orders of Faqirs or Darweshes [...] the performance of zikr is very common in all Muhammadan [Muslim] countries...<sup>5</sup>

Ian Richard Netton also speaks about *dhikr* in a historical, extra-Qur’ānic sense:

Dhikr or zikr [...] literally, ‘remembrance’, ‘recollection’, ‘mention’. In tasawwuf, this word has acquired a technical sense of ‘litany’ in which the name

2 Ar-Rāḡib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradati alfāzi l-qur’ān* (Beirut, 1972), p. 181.

3 Ar-Rāḡib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradati alfāzi l-qur’ān*, p. 181.

4 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Glossary and Index of Technical Terms* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 65.

5 Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1994), p. 703.

of God, or formulae like ‘God is Most Great’ (*Allahu Akbar*), are repeated over and over again in either a high or a low voice.<sup>6</sup>

Arne A. Ambros and Stephan Prochazka assert that *dhikr* is: “To invoke something where the direct object (usually) is God’s name”,<sup>7</sup> while the eminent *Arabic – English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage* claims:

In the Quran the verb *dhakara* means – to mention; to remember; to remember God’s favour /to smb/; to recall /God/; to keep in mind; to meditate /within one’s soul/; to use the /good/ example of smb/; to put into /good/ practise, etc.<sup>8</sup>

While it is useful to consider how Islamic and Qur’anic dictionaries define *dhikr*, it is equally important to consult contemporary semantic studies on the Qur’an. Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993),<sup>9</sup> for example, observed that the root *dh-k-r* is strongly connected to the Qur’an’s discourse on the mysteries of God, the universe and all God’s creatures, including humanity. The meaning of the root *dh-k-r* in the message of the Qur’an is clear: it is the divine secret, and the main reason why one of humanity’s greatest tasks is to mention God, to remember God, and to pronounce His names.

## 2. God as both the Subject and Object of *dhikr*

According to the Qur’anic Worldview, readers of the Qur’an should keep in mind that the Speaker (God Almighty) often mentions the text itself, sometimes referring to it as *adh-dhikr*, and speaking of it as His divine work. In other words: God Himself reveals the Reminder (*adh-dhikr* = the Qur’an) and preserves this Reminder.<sup>10</sup>

“It is We who sent down the Remembrance, and We watch over it!”<sup>11</sup>

The words that God sent down the Remembrance (*adh-dhikr*) and is the One who watches over it mean that the Qur’an is a blessed collection of many

6 Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, London, 1992), pp. 70-71.

7 Arne A. Ambros and Stepan Prochazka, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), p. 104.

8 Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic – English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage* (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 328-329.

9 See: Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur’an: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2015).

10 al-Ḥiġr, 15:9.

11 See: Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, p. 281.

remembrances of God. This is made clear to individuals and humanity as a whole in many sūrahs.

Likewise, the credo of the Qur'ān reminds us: God Himself is the One who calls the Qur'ān the “Wise Reminder” (*adh-dhikr al-ḥakīm*).<sup>12</sup> This syntagma is used for the Qur'ān out of respect. At the same time, *adh-dhikr al-ḥakīm* means that all Qur'ānic reminders, revelations, remembrances, and wonders are firmly connected to wisdom (*al-ḥikma*). Namely, *al-ḥikma* (*wisdom*) itself is a revealed component and integral part of the Qur'ān.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere in the Qur'ān, it is said that man, as a being endowed with exceptional gifts from his Creator, is capable and predisposed to find wisdom in the holy books, and then to find this same wisdom, through remembrance or *dhikr*, at the world's horizons. In short: the Qur'ān is a book of divine knowledge and remembrance, or Divine *Dhikr*.

According to the sublime meaning of the Qur'ān, God, with His infinite knowledge, has *dhikr* at His disposal, and with it He remembers His creatures with His divine remembrance. A verse of Āyah 2:152<sup>14</sup> proclaims this far-reaching message, which is expressed as the Creator's call to mutual divine and human remembrance: “So remember Me, and I will remember you!”<sup>15</sup>

From this page of the Qur'ān, a call for blessed reciprocal participation emanates, achieved through a precious remembrance intertwined with divine and human components.

One ideal of the Qur'ān is that God and humanity both participate in *dhikr*. The Qur'ān represents the gift of God's words to humanity, and in this context *dhikr*, as a sublime divine remembrance, is a particularly special gift. From a human perspective, to remember God means to remember the Highest Good, the Infinite Source, the only true Creator, the One who, from His eternity, bestows upon us creation, our selves, and the many blessings of time. In practice, when God remembers His creation, He revives it, and reminds it of the being and becoming of the living creature.

The textual evidence of the Qur'ān shows that *dhikr* encompasses the pious, rational, intellectual, and contemplative activity of remembering God, in which every person is obliged to engage. Its pages contain a certain unease or apprehension when man is addressed imperatively (73:8): *Udhkur!* – “Mention

12 Āli 'Imrān, 3:58. See: Arberry: *Wise remembrance*, p. 82; and Hartmut Bobzin: *der weisen Mahnung*, p. 53.

13 See: al-Baqara (2:151), where it is declared that “Prophet Muhammad was sent to recite God's āyat to people, to purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*), and to teach them what they did not know!”

“... as also We have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger, to recite Our signs to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book and the Wisdom, and to teach you that you knew not.” See: Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 47.

14 al-Baqara, 2:152.

15 Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 47.

God!” “Remember God!” “Think about God!” “Call God to mind!” “Contemplate God!” The Qur’ān states directly that the imperative form of *udhkur!* focuses on God as Lord (*ar-rabb*). The Prophet Muhammad and every man and woman are required to complete their *dhikr* by remembering God’s name:<sup>16</sup>

“And remember the name of your Lord!”<sup>17</sup>

Sūrah al-A’rāf, 7:205 places *dhikr* within the human soul, imploring humanity to “remember our Lord in the depths of our souls”:<sup>18</sup>

“Remember your Lord in your soul!” (7:205).<sup>19</sup>

Conversely, Sūrah Al-Kahf, 18:24 contrasts the *dhikr* of man with his forgetfulness, which means that *dhikr* protects us from the latter’s evil consequences:<sup>20</sup>

“...and mention your Lord when you forget!”<sup>21</sup>

The Islamic Worldview holds that through the many occurrences of *ad-dhikr*, the Qur’ān teaches us that the name of God should be mentioned as often as possible. According to ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī, this should be done both with the tongue (*bi l-lisān*) and the heart (*bi l-qalb*). Mentioning and remembering God are among the highest levels of piety and devotion. In the aforementioned examples, where *dhikr* is associated with ‘your Lord’, the main purposes and means of *dhikr* are clear: a) uttering God’s name as a means of *dhikr*; b) mentioning the human soul as the means and locus of *dhikr*; and c) defining *dhikr* as a kind of mental strength that stands in contrast to forgetting.

In these paragraphs, the divine word of the Qur’ān proclaims that *dhikr* is the highest or most exalted form of remembrance of God. This is not just about the sacred semantics of the word, but that ‘*dhikr*/remembrance/of God’ is the greatest thing a person can bring before God.

Sūrah Al-‘Ankabut, 29:45 states:

“God’s remembrance is greater!”

16 al-Muzzammil, 73:8.

17 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 308.

18 al-A’rāf, 7:205.

19 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 196.

20 al-Kahf, 18:24.

21 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 319.

To translate the āyah (29:45) in this way is to use only one possibility offered by the Arabic original of the Qur'ān. Namely, in addition to the interpretation of this āyah that implies man's remembrance of God, there is another interpretation that reads: "God's remembrance of us humans is the highest remembrance!"

The various English translations of this āyah (29:45) indicate the importance of this Qur'ānic verse. John Arthur Arberry believes that *Wa la dhikru 'llahi akbaru* means "God's remembrance is greater!"<sup>22</sup> Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall, however, suggests a different meaning: "... but remembrance of God is more important!"<sup>23</sup> Qur'ān translator John Medows Rodwell iterates the verse as: "And the gravest duty is the remembrance of God!"<sup>24</sup> This is similar to Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al.'s interpretation: "... but the remembrance of God is surely greater!"<sup>25</sup>

When interpreting *Wa la dhikru 'llahi akbaru*, many commentators of the Qur'ān mention at least three interpretive possibilities for this passage (29:45). First, divine remembrance is the greatest form of remembrance. In other words, it is in humanity's best interests to be remembered by God.<sup>26</sup>

In Islam, the highest form of communication with God is therefore *ṣalāt* or *namāz*, because of the frequency with which God's name is mentioned, and as *dhikr* is among the most important contents of Islamic prayer.

### 3. Dhikr to Evoke Remembrance of Notable Persons in the Heavenly Books

The imperative *Udhkur!* is used in several places in the Qur'ān to command the Prophet Muhammad (and every human being) to mention and remember notable persons such as Maryam, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Idrīs, Ismā'īl, Ishāq, Ya'qūb, Dāwūd, and Ayyūb. Such practice evokes in the mind and heart the sacred and continuously present monotheistic history of humanity in Judaism, Christianity,

22 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 102.

23 Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall in *The Qur'ān*, Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.) (New York, London: Norton & Company, 2017), p. 212.

24 See: John Medows Rodwell (trans.) *The Koran* (New York: Bantam Classic, 2004), p. 286.

25 See: Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), p. 977.

26 It is this meaning that al-Qurṭubī adopts in his interpretation of āyah 29:45: "*Dhikru llahi iyyakum akbaru min dhikrikum iyyahu.*" (God's remembrance of you [oh people] is greater than your remembrance of God!)

Some Qur'ānic commentaries claim that *Wa la dhikru 'llahi akbaru* means: "O people! The highest being that you can even remember, that you can even mention is – God!"

The third meaning of *Wa la dhikru 'llahi akbaru* is: "Oh people! Oh humanity! Be aware that all your prayers are very important. But the most important is *dhikrullah* or remembrance of God!"

and Islam. The Prophet Muhammad and all people who read the Qur'ān and other heavenly books are commanded to remember: *Udhkur!*

The mere utterance of this word is a way of practising *dhikr* through the Qur'ān, where the Qur'ān itself is the means of this sublime remembrance. The divine word of the Qur'ān introduces many individuals from humanity's monotheistic history into this significant circle of *dhikr*. Surah Maryam, 19:16, states: "And mention in the Book Mary!";<sup>27</sup> then Ibrāhīm's name is invoked (19:41): "And mention in the Book Abraham ...";<sup>28</sup> then Mūsā (19:51): "And mention in the Book Moses ...";<sup>29</sup> then Ismā'il (19:51): "And mention in the Book Ishmael ...";<sup>30</sup> then Idrīs (19:56): "And mention in the Book Idris ...".<sup>31</sup>

When the textual evidence is pursued further, the blessed continuation of *dhikr* is evident in these revelations: "And remember Our servant Dāwūd" (*wa-dhkur 'abdanā dāwūda*);<sup>32</sup> "Remember also Our servant Ayyub" (*wa-dhkur 'abdanā ayyūba*);<sup>33</sup> "Remember also Our servants Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb" (*wa-dhkur 'ibadanā ibrahīma wa ishāqa wa ya'qūba*);<sup>34</sup> and "Remember also Our servants Ismā'il, Alyasa', and Dhul Kifl" (*wa-dhkur ismā'ila wa l-yasa'a wa dha-lkifl*).<sup>35</sup>

Also notable is the reference to the "brother of Ad" in Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf (46:21), where it is commanded: *Wa-dhkur akhā 'ād*; "and remember the brother of Ad".<sup>36</sup> It is clear that the brother here is God's prophet Hūd. The aforementioned proclamations of the Qur'ān demonstrate that *udhkur* in the singular imperative encompasses a large number of God's messengers from the monotheistic tradition. This imperative *udhkur* is a reminder of the moral messages of monotheism. The sublime gallery of notable figures in humanity's monotheistic history is presented to the Qur'ān's readers so they can perform *dhikr* with them. In a vital and spiritual way, the Qur'ān calls us to believe in God as Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, Ismā'il, Ya'qūb, Mūsā, Maryam, Idrīs, and Muḥammad did. This is a continuation of *dhikr* that the Qur'ān wholeheartedly advocates.

These parts of the Qur'ān show us that monotheistic human history is visibly encompassed by the orbit of *dhikr*, or remembrance of God and the divine. This means that through it, human beings can learn the meaning of how divine messages are received through time and history. In this way, human history itself is a means of *dhikr*.

27 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 331.

28 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 333.

29 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 334.

30 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 334.

31 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 335.

32 *Ṣād*, 38:17.

33 *Ṣād*, 38:41.

34 *Ṣād*, 38:45.

35 *Ṣād*, 38:48.

36 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 217.

The plural imperative *udhkurū* is mentioned twenty-nine times in the Qur’ān. With it, people are implored to remember God: *Udhkurū-llāha*. Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (33:41) calls upon believers to do so often:

“O believers, remember God oft ...”<sup>37</sup>

A Qur’ānic exhortation is evident here: It is best to remember God and mention Him by remembering what He has revealed or what He has created. As the Qur’ān states: “Remember what is in God’s book” (*Wadhkurū mā fīh*).<sup>38</sup> People are commanded to remember the blessings in this world, because they come from God: *Wadhkurū ni‘matallāhi*,<sup>39</sup> *wadhkurū ālā’allāhi*.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Natural Phenomena in the Orbit of dhikr

A fundamental truth about the Qur’ān is that it is the “book of divine signs” (*al-āyāt – signs of God*); whoever reads it as such is reading it correctly. In practice, the sacred semiotics of the Qur’ān imply that everything in the universe functions and unfolds as an innumerable multitude of divine signs. Constellations, stars, planets, the Earth itself, the plant and animal world, and the worlds of humanity – nothing is isolated in the universe, but everything is interconnected, and everything points to the infinite whole of divine creation. Ultimately, these are all signs of God.

But the multitudes of these divine signs are not immersed in the great chasms of the universe in a mechanistic way. Rather, God’s mercy and intimacy encompass all the worlds and divine signs, and keep them alive. These divine signs are meaningful, and send the message: There is God! God exists! And precisely because God exists, there is no place for despair, hopelessness, and meaninglessness in any corner of the universe. That is the positivity of the Qur’ān: the exhortation to embark on a search for hope.

It is no coincidence that the Qur’ān mentions *dhikr* when addressing the phenomena of the earth, the heavens, and the universe. The creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of day and night, the ship loaded with useful cargo, and rain that God sends down from the sky, causing all kinds of plants to grow in the soil, are all mentioned several times. These are the means

37 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 126.

38 al-Baqara, 2:63.

39 al-Baqara, 2:231.

40 al-A’rāf, 7:74.

of *dhikr*, or the materials and phenomena through which we remember God. As Sūrah Ali 'Imrān (3:190-191) beautifully states:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in alternation of night and day there are signs for men possessed of minds who remember God (*yadhkurūnallāha*), standing, and sitting on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth ...<sup>41</sup>

In this passage, it is clear that 'remembering God' (*yadhkurūnallāh*) is accompanied by 'contemplating' (*yatafakkarūn*) the creation of the heavens and the earth. The Qur'an confirms that *dhikr*, as a human faculty, can legitimately deal with God and the world of divine secrets, while *fikr*, as a key mental power, addresses the secrets of the creation of the heavens and the earth. This means that *fikr* also involves considering God through His creations.

Verse 3:190-191 directly mentions the glorious themes of the Qur'an: a) the creation of the heavens and the earth; b) the alternation of the day and night; c) signs for human beings of reason; d) those who remember God (*yadhkurūnallāh*) while, externally or formally, standing, sitting, or lying on their right or left side; and e) those who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*) and contemplate how God continuously realises the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The beginning of creation is a broad Qur'anic theme, and believers are exhorted to be courageous and serious when considering it. This is because the most difficult question in every theology, philosophy and scientific theory is: When, how and why did the universe begin?

The Qur'an earnestly urges us to use our mental strength to acknowledge the Divine Eternity and 'Beginninglessness', by contemplating how God began the creation of the heavens and the earth. Among several such exhortations, that in Sūrah Al-'Ankabut (29:20) is typical: humanity is advised to travel the earth and insightfully observe how God began creation.

"Journey in the land, then behold how He [God] originated creation ..."<sup>42</sup>

The Qur'an terms this "initial creation", or initiation of the pulse of the universe – *an-naṣ'ah al-ūlā*.<sup>43</sup> This can mean the beginning of both the creation of the universe and the creation of each person and each creature. It can also mean the first growth, for example, of a plant:

41 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 97.

42 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 99.

43 al-Wāqī'ah, 56:62.

“You have known the first growth; so why will you not remember?”<sup>44</sup>

Because the Qur’ān clearly mentions *‘ilm* along with *dhikr* (*‘alimtum – tadhakkarūn*), *tadhakkarūn* can be understood as a sublime wonder at the manifestations and phenomena of the world. Verse 56:62 implies the question: Why do you not marvel at this first creation, this initial growth?

In many places, and with sublime wonder, the Qur’ān urges people to understand their life as a gradual realisation –first in this world, and then in the Hereafter. Just as plants bloom in the spring and then bear their fruit, so God will give humanity a second life. The Qur’ān cites humans as a great medium of sublime wonder, or *dhikr*. As nature sprouts, grows and thrives, so God will bring the dead to life, so that humanity may learn from this and be amazed:<sup>45</sup>

“Even so We shall bring forth the dead; haply you will remember!”<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Dhikr as an Arabesque of Reminders

The Qur’ān connects its themes by the sacred magic of its words; it is the task of commentators to uncover the myriad connections and relationships. *Dhikr* in the Qur’ān concerns God, people, nature, and the universe, but also the secrets of the human soul and self.

In the worlds of the Qur’ān, people are important because they are the only beings with the capability to fulfil the demands of *dhikr*. People are endowed with spiritual and mental gifts, strengths and powers. Heart, mind, intellect, sight, hearing, thinking, intuition, and contemplation are the sublime forces in humans that allow us to detect *dhikr* as a remembrance of God, a reminder of the courage of human existence, and a sublime wonder, similar to that discussed by Plato.<sup>47</sup>

The Qur’ān is expressed in such a way that *dhikr* (or remembrance of God) can be found in its messages without difficulty: “Are there any sensible people who would accept the warning of the Qur’ān?!”<sup>48</sup>

“We have made the Koran easy for Remembrance, is there any who will remember?”<sup>49</sup>

44 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 256.

45 al-A’rāf, 7:57.

46 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 10A.

47 In Plato’s thought, wonder is a source of human philosophising and philosophy itself.

48 al-Qamar, 54:22.

49 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 24A.

With this appeal, the Qur'ān offers a sublime and pleasant wonder, or *dhikr*. The latter's ultimate goal, as addressed to man and his soul, is to make people see and believe that God is the one and only, that He should be worshipped, and that a lesson and warning should be taken from this:<sup>50</sup> "That then is God, your Lord, so serve Him! Will you not remember!"<sup>51</sup>

In the Qur'ān, *dhikr* is often a reminder that creation is the power and domain of God alone:<sup>52</sup> "Is He who creates as He who does not create? Will you not remember!"<sup>53</sup>

In the verses of the Qur'ān, humanity is specifically reminded through *dhikr* that God is one (*tawhīd*), but that creation takes place through multitudes (*takthīr*). God creates everything in pairs, and humans should learn from this (*dhikr*):<sup>54</sup> "And of everything created We two kinds; Haply you will remember!"<sup>55</sup>

*Dhikr* is frequently mentioned in connection to issues that cause wonder, or serve as a lesson or warning. This process of Qur'ānic revelation is visible in Sūrah An-Naml, 27:62, which asks whether it is possible for there to be another deity alongside the one and only God: "Is there a god with God? Little indeed do you remember!"<sup>56</sup>

As if by sacred rule, the divine word of the Qur'ān often ends such parts where people are invited to open themselves to *dhikr* with sublime symphonies phrased in the language of the Arabic original, where *dhikr* reminds people of the reason (*ulū l-albāb*)<sup>57</sup> why God is the one and only:

This is a message to be delivered to mankind that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is One God, and that all possessed of minds may remember.<sup>58</sup>

The revelation of the Qur'ān takes into account that humans are an important (perhaps the most important) medium of *dhikr*. *Dhikr* is many things simultaneously: a pious remembrance of God; a cautionary remembrance for man burdened by his life; awe at the magnificent scenes of creation; and the glorification of God as the creator.

50 *Yūnus*, 10:3.

51 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 224.

52 *An-Nahl*, 16:17.

53 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. I, p. 288.

54 *Adh-Dhāriyāt*, 51:49.

55 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 239.

56 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, vol. II, p. 82.

57 *Ibrāhīm*, 14:52.

58 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, p. 280.

Although the Qur'ān testifies that everything in the universe praises, glorifies, and extols God as its creator, humans often do not comprehend that everything in existence glorifies God. This is explicitly stated in Sūrah Al-Isra (17:44):

The seven heavens and the earth, and whosoever in them is, extol Him; nothing is, that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is All-clement, All-forgiving.<sup>59</sup>

If we could hear all the sounds that permeate the universe, only then would we become aware of the many dimensions and roles that *dhikr* plays in everything that exists. This makes it likely that we cannot hear all the symphonies that ripple through the universe, a regrettable state of affairs, expressed by an Andalusian poet:

“Do not say: Oh, how quiet it is! Do say: I cannot hear anything!”

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59 Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, p. 307.

## Sredstva zikra u Kur'anu

### Sažetak

Sjećanje o Bogu (*zikr*) u Kur'anu je jedna od ključnih riječi temeljne knjige islama. Uz riječi koje su izvedene od korijena ayn-lām-mīm u značenjima “znati”, “spoznati”, “naučiti”, u Kur'anu po učestalosti spominjanja gotovo odmah slijedi riječ *zikr* u značenjima “sjetiti se”, “opomenuti se”, “uzeti pouku”. Sura Šād (38:1) obznanjuje Božansku zakletvu: “Tako mi Kur'āna koji je ispunjen Opomenom”. Mnoga su područja i planovi na koje Kur'an ukazuje riječima izvedenim iz korijena ḡ-k-r: Svijet Božanskih stvari, svijet Prirode u njegovoj spontanosti i raskoši, čovjek i njegove granične situacije, sveto monoteističko predanje. Ali, riječ *zikr* uvijek se odnosi na jedno uzvišeno opominjanje čovjeka da se sjeća Boga, da se sjeća tajne zašto svijet jeste, tajne stvaranja svijeta i Božanskih znakova, da se sjeća i bude budan spram čudorednog života, trajanja i smrti. Ukratko, zikr je tu da nas podsjeti na krajnju tajnu Boga i svijeta, života i smrti.

**Ključne riječi:** Kur'an, zikr, čovjek, sjećanje, Božanski znakovi, fenomeni prirode, sveta povijest čovječanstva