CHAPTER 13

The Dearest Place

The Praised withdrew in solitude to a cave on Mount Hira above Becca, where God sent him the revelation through the Holy Spirit: “Recite: In the name of thy Lord who created, created Man of a blood-clot. Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the Pen, taught Man that he knew not.”

What Adam indicated by building two houses to mark our fall and ascent is condensed and realized in the Praised. He represents perfection for all in the depths, as a mercy to the worlds, for with him we find our sublime potential – confessing Unity, prophecy and return.

The Praised addressed the revelation he received to us. He introduced the Self’s discourse into human language, the expressive mode of the forgetful self, transforming our view of both the horizons and the self. God’s call, whose first witness he is, tears down behaviour, views and knowledge established without connection to the Principle. This produces resistance and hostility, since being born to a higher means dying to a lower level.

Forced to leave the Valley, the Praised turned back, saying: “Of all God’s earth, thou are the dearest place unto me and the dearest unto God, and had not my people driven out from thee I would not have left thee.”

Going north, away from the house, the Praised testified he was the centre of existence into whose heart the holy Spirit descends. The house in the valley is a sign of that heart of every heart, in which we can all realize ourselves, as Adam could and all his children can to the end of this world. Only what bears witness of this, in whatever guise, offers a warrant on the upright path. When the Praised described the Becca valley as the place dearest to him and God, he meant God’s mercy, which encompasses all things, and his own apostolate as a mercy to the worlds. Nothing, no matter where it is, is beyond this mercy. Is there any greater joy than for those in the worst, most contemptible state? Is it not for their sake, the despised and rejected, that God remind us of redemption through doctrine, rite and virtue?

Mercy manifests as redemptive for people in the depths, the worst state, whom neither God nor His apostle have abandoned:

1 Qur’an, 96:1–5.
2 Lings, Muhammad, 118.
God knows of it. All food was lawful to the children of Israel save what Israel forbade for himself before the Torah was sent down. Say: “Bring you the Torah now, and recite it, if you are faithful.” Whoso forges falsehood against God after that, those are the evildoers. Say: “God has spoken the truth; therefore follow the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith and no concealer.” The first house established for people was that at Becca, a place holy, and a guidance to all beings. Therein are clear signs – the station of Abraham, and whosoever enters it is in security. It is the duty of all men towards God to come to the house a pilgrim, if he is able to make his way there. As for the concealers, God is All-sufficient nor needs any being. Say: “People of the Book, why do you cover over and conceal the signs of God? Surely God is witness of the things you do.” Say: “People of the Book, why do you bar from God’s way the believer, desiring to make it crooked, yourself being witnesses? God is not heedless of the things you do.” O believers, if you obey a sect of those who have been given the Book, they will turn you, after you have believed, into concealers. How can you conceal, seeing you have God’s signs recited to you, and His apostle among you? Whosoever holds fast to God, he is guided to the upright path. O, believers.

It belongs not to any mortal that God should give him the Book, the Judgment, the prophethood, then he should say to men, “Be you servants to me apart from God.” Rather, “Be you masters in that you know the Book, and in that you study.” He will never order you to take the angels and the prophets as Lords; what, would He order you to conceal, after you have found peace? And when God took compact with the prophets: “That I have given you the Book and Wisdom; then there shall come to you an apostle confirming what is with you – you shall believe in him and you

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3 Qur’an, 3:92–102. The text quoted corresponds to a page of a manuscript Qur’an of 1598, given in figure 2.5.