

# **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# THE PHRASE YAS'ALUNAKA 'THEY ASK YOU' AND ITS RESPONSESIN SURAH AL-BAQARAH – AN OBJECTIVE STUDY

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# Abstract

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Questioning is a linguistic method with significant importance in clarifying ideas and conveying concepts. When Allah mentions something in the Quran, it aims to establish a specific principle and guide humanity in using this method correctly. Conversely, some questions and inquiries are prohibited, as the limited human intellect cannot delve into them or express opinions or thoughts. This is exemplified in Allah's disapproval of the Prophet's questioning about things that have not occurred. Excessive questioning is identified as a cause of destruction for individuals. The companions themselves discouraged frequent questioning of the Prophet, raising questions about the numerous questions and interrogations in Surah Al-Baqarah. This study explores the connection between these questions, the themes of the Surah, and the prohibited inquiries. The misconception that the companions did not ask about matters that occurred to them or excessively questioned the Prophet is addressed, emphasizing the need for a scientific approach to understand the types of questioners, the nature of the questions, and the society in which they were asked. The phrase "They ask you" appears thirteen times in the Quran, five of which are in Surah Al-Baqarah, covering various topics related to daily life.

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# Introduction:-

The Quran is the source and origin of sciences, with its rays encompassing the vast field of knowledge. It was revealed by the Almighty as a miraculous guidance for all of humanity, containing comprehensive knowledge expressed with eloquence and rhetorical brilliance that captivates minds and captivates hearts. Its miraculous composition, understood only by the Knower of the Unseen, serves as a guide and a clear path for righteous conduct. Observing the noble companions, may Allah be pleased with them, one finds that they eagerly sought to understand the intentions of Allah within its verses. A man among them would approach the Prophet, peace be upon him, with questions not motivated by the obstinacy seen in the queries of the Children of Israel, but rather as inquiries driven by a genuine desire for goodness and seeking knowledge.

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For knowledge, there are means, with questioning being one of the most crucial. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, expressed this idea, saying, "The increase in knowledge comes through seeking, and the

**Corresponding Author:- Hussein Ali Abdullah Al-Thulaia** Address:- Research Scholar, Department of Al-Qura'an and Sunnah, College of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Unversiti Sultan Zainal Abidin. attainment of knowledge comes through questioning" (Ibn Abdul Barr, 2000, 1/374). It is from this standpoint that the researcher is motivated to delve into this subject.

This research will consist of two sections, outlined as follows:

# **First Topic: Linguistic Definition**

# Linguistically:

The term "سوال" (question) linguistically refers to what is asked of a student to answer in an examination, encompassing questions in plural form. The root of the word is associated with the act of asking, and a question signifies an inquiry. In the reverse context, a question is defined as an interrogative sentence that requires a response from the addressee (Al-Askari, 1992).

#### In Technical Terms:

In technical terms, linguists understand a question as a demand, while educators interpret it as the subject. In Jumil Saliba's philosophical lexicon, a question is linked to the summoning of knowledge (3102) Elharar Academic Success. The Answer: In technical terminology, various aspects of the word "الجاب" (answer) are understood as derivatives of the verb "أجاب على" (answered), such as "أجاب على" (answered on), "أجاب عن" (answered to). An answer to a question is defined as a fulfillment of the request (Omar, 2008, 1/416).

# Second Topic: Quranic Verses and Contexts

# **First Subtopic: Introduction**

A contemplation of the Quranic questions and answers within Surah Al-Baqarah reveals numerous profound benefits in the method of questioning and answering, making it critically important to extract lessons from them. The utilization of responses is contingent upon the inquirer's circumstances and the nature of the inquiry. Surah Al-Baqarah encompasses within its verses six instances of explicit questions posed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the answers to these questions were provided by the Lord of the Worlds. We will enumerate these questions in this blessed paper, with the permission of the Almighty.

#### Second Subtopic: Quranic Passages

First verse: (فِي الدُنْيَاوَالْآخِرَةِوَيَسْئُلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَٰمَنَّقَارِصْلَاحَ لَهُمْخَيَرٌ وَإِن تُخَالِطُوهُمَفَإِخْوٰنُكُمُّوَاللَّهُيَعْلَمُالْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِخُوَلَوْشَاءَاللَّهُلاَ عَنَتَكُمُّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزً حَكِيمَ ٢٠ } [البقرة: 220]

# Allah's Statement:

{They ask you about the crescent moons. Say, "They are measurements of time for the people and for Hajj." It is not righteousness to enter houses from the back, but righteousness is [in] one who fears Allah. And enter houses from their doors. And fear Allah that you may succeed. } [Al-Baqarah: 198]. Reason for Revelation: Al-Shawkani, may Allah have mercy on him, mentioned that the reason for the revelation of this verse, according to Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, was in response to a question posed by Ma'adh ibn Jabal and Tha'labah ibn Uthman, two Ansari men. They said, "O Messenger of Allah, what is the matter with the crescent moon, as it appears thin like a thread, then increases until it becomes large and equal, then it decreases and becomes thin again until it returns to its initial state? Why does it not remain in one state?" In response to this, the verse {They ask you about the crescent moons...} was revealed (Al-Shawkani, Fath al-Qadeer, 1/281). This verse is the opening of the series of questions in the Quran, and a question, as Ibn Ashur mentioned, is when someone asks for something or seeks information. If the request is for giving something, it is a direct request. If it is for information, the verb is followed by "عن" (about) or its equivalent. (Ibn Ashur, Al-Tahrir wal-Tanwir, 1984 CE, 2/194). This Surah includes several verses starting with "under the way ou), and seven of them are relatively close to each other. Some are not connected by a coordinating conjunction, consisting of four, while others are connected. The last three are connected, and they can be understood by examining their contexts.

The wise method is to answer the question differently than what was asked, redirecting the questioner to what is beneficial and worthy of inquiry. If the question is about wisdom, this is a wise approach. If the question is about a cause or rationale, this approach is also wise. The verse {They ask you about the crescent moons...} is not a direct answer to the inquirers' exact question. Allah commanded the Prophet to respond by saying: {Say, "They are measurements of time for the people and for Hajj."} This response aligns with the nature of the inquiry, whether they were asking about the wisdom behind the phases of the moon or the cause and rationale. This wise approach

aims to guide the questioner to what is more beneficial and worth asking. The meaning can be understood as follows: "They ask you, O Muhammad, about the crescent moons. Say: They are marks for people to determine their worldly affairs, such as the timing of agriculture, trade, debt settlement, coming and going, and similar matters suitable for lunar timing. They also serve as indications for the temporary religious obligations, such as fasting, Hajj, even if the moon is in one phase. Without this varied progression, lunar timing for these matters would not be possible" (Al-Tafsir Al-Wasit, 1993 CE).

#### Al-Tabari commented:

They ask you, O Muhammad, about the crescent moons, their waxing, waning, perfection, and completion, and how their conditions change with increase, decrease, termination, and continuity, unlike the sun, which is perpetually in one state and never changes in increase or decrease. Then Allah ordered His Prophet to respond to them, saying: "Say, O Muhammad, that Allah has created a distinction between the crescent moons you asked about and the sun, which is in perpetual uniformity, by assigning these crescent moons as signs for determining times for you and for others among the children of Adam. You anticipate their increase, decrease, termination, and continuity, and by them, you schedule your lives, your financial obligations, the end of your leases, and the timing of your fasting and breaking your fasts. Therefore, Allah made them indicators for people and times, and they also serve as timings for Hajj, where you recognize and anticipate their occurrences, allowing you to meet your obligations and to end your leases. So, Allah made them timings for people and timings for Hajj" (Al-Tabari, 2000 CE, 3/555). It is most likely that the companions, may Allah be pleased with them, asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, about the practical benefits of the changing phases of the crescent moon, rather than inquiring about its physical appearance. This is indicated by the nature of the response, as the default is that the answer aligns with the question unless there is explicit evidence to the contrary, as mentioned by Al-Suyuti (Al-Itqan, 1996 CE, 2/370).

#### Second verse:

# (يَسْئُلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونُقَاْمَاآنفَقْتُمتِنْخَيْر فَالْوُلِدَيْنِوَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَوَ ٱلْمَسْكِينِوَ ٱبْنِالسَّبِيلِّ وَمَا تَفْعَلُواْمِنْخَيْر فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَبِ عَلِيم ٢٠) [البقرة: 215] Allah's Statement:

{They ask you what they should spend. Say, "Whatever you spend of good is for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler. And whatever you do of good, indeed, Allah is Knowing of it."} [Al-Baqarah: 215]

#### **Reason for Revelation:**

This verse was revealed regarding Amr ibn al-Jamuh al-Ansari from the Banu Salama, a wealthy elder. He asked the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, how he should spend his wealth. This was before the obligation of Zakat, and Allah revealed this verse in response (Al-Baghawi, 1997 CE, 1/245).

The scholars explained that since the previous verse {They ask you what they should spend} asked about the recipients of spending, and the answer was given accordingly, the second question in this verse was about the amount of expenditure. Regarding Amr ibn al-Jamuh, when the verse {Say, "Whatever you spend of good is for parents..."} was revealed, he asked, "How much should I spend?" Then the verse {Say, "The excess beyond needs..."} was revealed. The term "Al-Afwa" means what is easy, facilitated, and virtuous, not burdensome to the heart. It implies giving what is beyond your needs without harming yourself, so you do not become dependent. This is the primary interpretation of the verse, as explained by Al-Hasan, Qatadah, Ata', Sufyan al-Thawri, Al-Suddi, Muhammad ibn Ka'b, Ibn Abi Layla, and others. They said, "Al-Afwa means what exceeds the necessities of your dependents." Mujahid said, "Charity from the surplus of wealth" (Al-Qurtubi, 1964 CE, 3/62).

#### Third yerse:

إِنْ يَسْئُلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْأَهِلَّةِ قَقَلَ هِيَ مَوٰقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَٱلْحَجَّوَانَيْسَٱلْبِرُ بِأَن تَأْتُواٱلْبُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلْبِرَّ مَنِ ٱتَّقَلُّوَ ٱتْلُابَيُوتَمِنْاَبَوْ بِهَأَوَٱتَقَوَ ٱللَّهُمَا عَلَى اللَّهُمَا وَالْمَدُوبَ مَا اللَّهُمَ عَلَى مَن اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُمَ عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَن الْعَقَلُو أَتُوا ٱلْبُيُوتَمِنْا بَوْ بِهَا وَٱتَقَالُوا ٱللَّهُمَا عَلَى مَن اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَن الْأَهِلَةُ الْعَلَى وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ الْعَلَى مَن اللَّهُ مَا مَا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْ مَن مَن عَقَلُوا الْبُيُوبَ عَلَى اللَّهُ مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا مَا مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا عَلَى اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا عَلَى مَا عَلَى الْعَلَى الْعَلَى مَن اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا مَنْ عَالَ الْعَلَيْقُ عَلَى مَا عَلَى مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا عَلَى مَا اللَّهُ عَلَى مُ

# Allah's Statement:

{They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is great [sin], but averting [people] from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and [preventing access to] al-Masjid al-Haram and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater [evil] in the sight of Allah. And fitnah is greater than killing." And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able. And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.} [Al-Baqarah: 217]

#### **Reason for Revelation:**

It is narrated from Az-Zuhri that he said: Urwah bin Az-Zubair informed me that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent a military expedition and appointed 'Abdullah bin Jahsh Asadi as its commander. They were given the option to attack the caravan of the Quraish, and if anyone had any doubt about their intention, they could leave them. They set out and when they reached a place called Nakhlah, which is not far from the sacred territory, the idolaters of the Quraish passed by them. Some of them said: We cannot kill them when we are in the sacred month, while others said: If they kill you, we will help you. When the two groups disagreed, fighting occurred between them, and some of them were killed, while others were taken captive. When the news reached the Prophet (ﷺ), he did not disapprove of their taking captives and killing them in the sacred month, but said: "The actions of the Quraish have made it permissible for you to shed their blood and take their properties." (Al-Wahidi, 1992 CE, p. 188)

The majority of scholars agree that the prohibition of fighting in the sacred months has been abrogated by the command to fight the polytheists wherever they are found. Some interpreters argue that it is not abrogated, as the general prohibition remains applicable. They explain that the specific context of this verse regarding the Battle of Nakhlah does not negate the general command to fight. Moreover, the sanctity of the sacred months, especially the prohibition of fighting, is one of their significant virtues. The verse emphasizes that the transgressions committed by the disbelievers, such as preventing access to Al-Masjid Al-Haram and expelling its people, are even graver than killing during these months.

This verse was revealed due to the incident involving the expedition led by Abdullah bin Jahsh, where they encountered the Quraish caravan near the sacred territory during the sacred month of Rajab. The disbelievers accused the Muslims of violating the sanctity of the sacred months, and this verse was revealed in response to their objections. The verse underscores the severity of the polytheists' actions and their relentless hostility towards the believers, highlighting that they will persist in fighting until they manage to turn the believers away from their religion.

The verse also warns about the consequences of apostasy, stating that if someone turns away from their religion and dies in a state of disbelief, their deeds will be in vain in both this world and the Hereafter, and they will be among the inhabitants of the Fire, where they will abide eternally. This emphasizes the gravity of abandoning one's faith and the importance of remaining steadfast in the face of trials and opposition. (As-Saadi, 2000 CE, p. 97)

I hope this provides a clear understanding of the third passage.

# Fourth verse:

﴿۞يَسَئُلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْحَمَرِوَٱلْمَيْسِرِ كُلْفِيهِمَا إِثْمَ كَبِيرَ وَمَنْفِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا آكْبَرُ مِن نَفْعِهِمَ أَوَيَسَئُلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلُ ٱلْعَفَقِ كَذَٰكَ يُبَيّنُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمُ ٱلْأَلْيَتَعَلَّكُمُ ۖ تَتَفَكَرُونَ ١٩ ٤ } [البقرة: 219]

Allah's Statement: {They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, 'In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.' And they ask you what they should spend. Say, 'The excess [beyond needs].' Thus Allah makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought.} [Al-Baqarah: 219]

#### **Reason for Revelation:**

This verse was revealed during the time of Umar bin Al-Khattab, Mu'adh bin Jabal, and a group of Ansar who came to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and asked him about the ruling on wine and gambling, considering them beneficial for the mind and a means of gaining wealth. In response to their inquiry, Allah revealed this verse. (Al-Wahidi, 1992 CE, p. 71)

# **Explanation:**

The believers asked the Messenger ( $\circledast$ ) about the rulings on wine and gambling, as these were prevalent practices during the pre-Islamic era and even in the early days of Islam. There seemed to be confusion or doubt regarding their legal status, so Allah commanded the Prophet ( $\circledast$ ) to clarify their harms and benefits, setting the stage for the subsequent prohibition.

Allah informed that the sin and harms associated with wine and gambling, such as the impairment of intellect, financial losses, distraction from the remembrance of Allah, hindrance from prayer, and the development of enmity and hatred, are greater than the perceived benefits derived from earning wealth through trade involving these substances. This clear exposition aimed to discourage the believers from engaging in these practices.

Regarding wine, it refers to any intoxicating substance that clouds the mind and judgment. As for gambling (almaysir), it includes any form of betting or games of chance where compensation is obtained from both sides, except for competitions involving horses, camels, or archery, as they were explicitly allowed due to their association with jihad. (As-Saadi, 2000 CE, p. 98)

After addressing the issues of wine and gambling, Allah continues to answer their questions, stating that they also ask about what they should spend. The response emphasizes spending in the way of Allah, seeking His pleasure, and recognizing that the primary focus should be on acts of kindness and charity, especially towards orphans. The verse encourages spending generously and with a sense of goodwill, without restricting oneself to specific amounts or items.

The verse highlights the importance of considering both the worldly and Hereafter aspects when making decisions related to expenditure. It reminds believers to reflect on the verses of Allah, urging them to make choices that align with their ultimate well-being and the guidance provided by Allah. The passage serves as a foundation for understanding the principles of spending in Islam and the broader ethical considerations that guide financial decisions. (Ibn Katheer, 1997 CE, 1/276)

# Fifth verse:

٣m verse. (فِي ٱلدُّنْيَاوَٱلْأَخِرَةِّوَيَسْلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْيَتْمَلُّقَلْإِصْلَاحَ لَّهُمْخَيْرٌ وَإِن تُخَالِظُوهُمْفَإِخْوَتُكُمُّوَٱللَّهُيَعْلَمُٱلْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ ٱلْمُصْلِحِّوَلَوَسْمَاءَاللَّهُلَاَعْنَتَكُمٌّ إِنَّ ٱللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمَ ٢٢ ﴾[البقرة: 220]

Allah's statement, "And they ask you about the orphans. Say, 'Improvement for them is best'" [Al-Baqarah: 220]. Meaning: They inquire about the orphans, seeking guidance on how to manage and deal with their wealth. The response is, "Improvement for them is best," indicating that righteous management and care of the orphans' wealth is in their best interest. This includes justly administering their finances, spending in their interests, with no compensation or profit allocated to those overseeing the improvement. The reward and compensation will be in the Hereafter.

The scholars have highlighted the importance of providing for orphans by managing their wealth to meet their needs and addressing their life and educational matters. Improvement also involves educating orphans and guiding them towards righteousness and virtue. "And if you associate with them, then they are your brothers" [Al-Baqarah: 220]. This phrase signifies the permissibility of interaction, allowing people to collaborate with orphans in their affairs and financial matters. This collaboration may involve investments or cooperation in developmental projects that benefit them. "And Allah knows best the corrupter from the amender. And if Allah had willed, He could have made it difficult for you. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise" [Al-Baqarah: 220].

This part of the verse indicates that Allah knows those seeking improvement from those intending harm in dealing with the orphans' wealth. If Allah had willed, He could have made matters more challenging for those dealing unjustly with the orphans' wealth. Here, Allah emphasizes His authority and wisdom in managing affairs. He acts with wisdom and knowledge.

# Sixth verse:

(وَيَسْئُلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْمَحِيضِّقُلْ هُوَ أَذَىفَاعَتَرِلُواٱلنِّسَآءَ فِي ٱلْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَظْهُرْنَ أَفَرَا الظَّهَرْ نَقَاتُوهُنَّمِنْحَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ ٱللَّا إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلتَّوْبِينَ وَيُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَطَهَرِينَ ٢ ٢ ﴾[البقرة: 222]

Allah's statement, "And they ask you about menstruation. Say, 'It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves'" [Al-Baqarah: 222].

# **Reason for Revelation:**

Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Jews used to expel menstruating women from their houses, refraining from eating, drinking, or having any physical contact with them. When the Prophet Muhammad was asked about this practice, Allah revealed this verse, instructing that menstruation is a harm, and during this period, one should refrain from approaching their wives intimately but not expel them from the house.

Explanation: Allah informs about their inquiry regarding menstruation, whether a woman remains in the same state after menstruation as she was before. Allah reveals that menstruation is indeed a harm, and, as a preventive measure,

Allah commands believers to avoid intimate contact with their wives during this period, specifically in the area of the genitals. This prohibition signifies that other forms of physical contact are allowed. However, Allah emphasizes the importance of avoiding intimate proximity in the region between the navel and the knee.

The verse specifies the period of avoidance, which is until the cessation of menstrual bleeding. Once they have purified themselves through bathing, then intimate relations are permissible. This verse emphasizes the obligation of ritual bathing (ghusl) for women at the end of their menstruation.

Allah, in His mercy, guides His servants away from harm and safeguards them. The command is lifted when the cause of the prohibition (menstrual bleeding) ceases. The verse concludes by stating that Allah loves those who constantly repent from sins and those who maintain physical and moral purity.

# **Conclusion:-**

In the conclusion, the researcher reached the following points:

1. The phrase "They ask you" appeared in six instances in the Quran, addressing various topics such as determining months, menstruation, intoxicants and gambling, orphans, and the sacred month.

2. Responses were not always direct; at times, they directed the questioners to consider other important matters, as seen in the response to the question about determining months.

3. It was emphasized that the inquiries were not always specific to Muslims, as some instances addressed issues related to non-Muslims, such as the verses about fighting during the sacred month.

4. The study of the phrase "They ask you" in Surah Al-Baqarah provides new insights into how Islam addresses the inquiries of believers, offering precise guidance for daily life and religious rituals.

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