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# Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and its Qur'anic References

Gürbüz DENİZ, Ass. Prof. Dr.

Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity  
gurbuzdeniz2002@yahoo.com

Ibn Tufayl (499/1005-581/1185) is a person who sought to live by the wisdom he acquired. Towards the end of his life, he completely devoted himself to metaphysics (*al-'ilm al-ilahi*) and made efforts to reconcile religion with philosophy<sup>1</sup>. His work, *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, is analogous to the life experience that he had.

In his work he points out that the scholars who lived in al-Andalus before him only paid attention either to religious sciences or, in addition to these, to logic and mathematics, the study of which, he declares, is insufficient for a scholar. Thus, not totally satisfied with religious sciences, he advanced his studies to achieve an eminent rank in such sciences as medicine, astronomy, and philosophy, which are called *al-'ulum al-ava'il*<sup>2</sup>.

Ibn Tufayl begins his book with an imaginary question which is directed to him by someone who appears to have inquired into the philosophy of *Ishraq*. Then he says that he discovered through the intuition of the Sufis the truths he will talk about in his work; yet since the language of the Sufis is inadequate to express these truths, he will use a philosophical language just as Ibn Sina before him did in his *al-Hikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*<sup>3</sup>. It thus turns out that, for Ibn Tufayl, the medium that is to convey metaphysical knowledge is the philosophical language.

The strongest evidence for his work's being scholarly is his introduction to that work<sup>4</sup>. For, there he critiques the philosophical heritage produced by the Muslim preceding him –just as Aristotle does his own predecessors– and puts forward his

ideas in a systematic fashion, just like a philosopher does. This strengthens the idea that *Hayy b. Yaqzan* is not just an adventurer novel but a scholarly examination in a philosophical sense, which can be detected by a careful reader in almost every line of the story. Also, the kind of reasoning that he conducted on the formidable and complicated issues of philosophy can be observed by those who are knowledgeable in Islamic philosophy.

A significant reason for the fact that Ibn Tufayl expressed his religious and philosophical views in a tale-like fashion is that he deemed it hard to understand by means of words the abstract metaphysical issues that he tried to convey, and that he tried to render them understandable by stating the knowledge and uncoverings of this field in a language of experience and psychological mood with no words involved. That is why he resorted to the Qur'anic method of narrating stories (*qissah*). We all know, as Hawi puts it, that "[a] tale arouses our interest and captures our imagination more readily than an essay. At dramatic points in *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*, our mind is spurred on by the zest and lure of good narration..."<sup>5</sup> So Ibn Tufayl did not hesitate to employ a symbolic language in explaining metaphysical issues and he used that language masterly; yet he saw no need for any symbols when it comes to the issues pertaining to the sensual world. In his work he put forth ideas concerning almost every existing being from plants to the moon, which redounds considerably to his being a philosopher<sup>6</sup>. If philosophy is to know the truth of things, Ibn Tufayl presented systematic knowledge regarding all existents in the physical and divine realms, and set forth his view on them.

In fact Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy b. Yaqzan* is itself evidence that a human being can become a philosopher on his own. Here someone who observes the nature created by God profoundly by using his intellect which also granted by Him shows us the possibility of positing better ideas than someone well-educated<sup>7</sup>. The crucial precondition for achieving such a high level is for the sound intellect to have been unimpaired<sup>8</sup>. It is clear between Hayy and Asal (Absal) that it is Hayy who has this superior rank.

The aim of Ibn Tufayl's work "is to show the capacity of the human intelligence. It is capable not only of discovering the sciences and the existence of the soul, but also of seeing God, beyond the corruptible world, and of attaching itself uniquely to Him when He has been found."<sup>9</sup> And the main goal of Ibn Tufayl is to discover the world of truth behind this degenerate world. He explains that his discovery is possible only through comprehension of the esoteric aspect of the Qur'an: "The Sacred Book has two aspects: external/exoteric and internal/esoteric<sup>10</sup>. Adopting only the external meaning of the Book causes some people to end up with the idea of corporeality of [God]. And this leads to some unjustified ascriptions made to God and the day of resurrection."<sup>11</sup> "Also sometimes there emerge certain problems because of the fact that there exist some ambiguous and obscure parts

in the sacred text."<sup>12</sup> "This is only natural, because the exoteric meanings are for the multitude. This language was employed because the multitude would not understand the esoteric meanings."<sup>13</sup>

While Hayy b. Yaqzan states that his profound knowledge which he obtained through all his experiences and which is in agreement with the esoteric/hidden meaning of the Qur'an is not of an acceptable nature for the masses, he also suggests that the source of all his knowledge is the Glorious Book. Studies on Ibn Tufayl's work conducted in the Muslim World and the West (as far as we know) have focused on two aspects: one is the naturalist/scientific aspect of Ibn Tufayl and the other the philosophical, which are considered to be the main sources of his knowledge. Apart from a few petty references, we have not come across any detailed studies indicated the Qur'an as the source of both the fiction of *Hayy b. Yaqzan* and ideas therein. So in this article we shall elaborate on this aspect as much as we can we shall not dwell on the work's philosophical and naturalist/scientific aspect, as there are sufficient studies on these features of the work<sup>14</sup>.

Ibn Tufayl achieves the august goal of philosophy by virtue of his individual acquisitions and by examining nature. He implies that the knowledge he acquired by means of making efforts to attain self-knowledge and the examination of nature is in harmony with the supranatural revelation of the Qur'an.

Here we shall attempt to uncover significant references to the source that he says he made implicitly. We shall present first a brief summary of the story of Hayy b. Yaqzan and then the source of the fictional structure of the story and the ideas advanced therein.

### Summary of the Tale

Ibn Tufayl begins his story by relating two different accounts as to how Hayy b. Yaqzan came into being. The first account has is that on the sub-equatorial Indian islands there were people with no parents. This account in turn relates two different modes of coming into being: according to the first mode, people would grow on tree branches just as fruits do; and in the second mode, coming into being results from the fermentation of the clay followed by the spirit of God joining to this fermentation. According to the second account, there was an island opposite the one on which Hayy grew up. That island was governed by a despotic king, who had a sister. The sister could not get married unless the king found someone fitting. But she loved a relative named Yaqzan and married him secretly in accordance with the customs of the society in which they lived. From this marriage was born a child named Hayy. Fearing that the king would do harm to the child, they put him in an ark which they, entrusting him to God, cast it into the sea. Afterwards, due to the ebb tide, the ark with the child in it was brought to the uninhabited island on which Hayy grew up<sup>15</sup>.

A doe that had lost her fawn attends to Hayy crying because of hunger and nurses him. From then on, Hayy remained with the company of the doe until he grew up to move about on his own<sup>16</sup>. Hayy covers his private parts when later on discovers himself and got a stick that he used as a weapon to protect himself from other animals bothering him. The doe's company lasted until it grew older. And just as the doe protected him when he was defenseless, he took it upon himself to protect the doe in her old age.

Shocked when the doe died, Hayy makes great efforts to revive her; yet not only does he fail but he gets puzzled as to what to do with the carcass of the doe. One day he witnesses a fight between two crows where one kills the other. Amazed by the victorious crow's digging a hole in the ground and burying the dead body of the other crow, Hayy regrets why he could not think of it before.

Later Hayy discovers a fire burning on the island, upon the examination of which he thinks that his soul should be of the same nature. As a consequence of his contemplated over natural phenomena, he focuses his attention on the things he observes and compares them with each other; which results in his classifying them under minerals, plants, and animals. He discovers that matter and form are central to things and that all things are in matter and the form is the sources of differences in them. He finds out that bodies are either heavy or light and that each body occupies a space; and then discovers that every created being has a creator; and that every existent therefore must have an originator, whose existence is necessary.

Having made sense of the world in which he lives, Hayy turns his eyes to the sky and realizes that stars are finite but perfect. He then thinks that finite things cannot originate by themselves and hence there must be an originator responsible for their existence and concludes that the creator must have qualities radically distinct from those of the created. In this process, Hayy realizes that he has a soul that is devoid of corporeality. This awareness leads him into profound thinking on the soul and to doing certain experiments on his own self. At the end, the asceticism and contemplation that he experiences lead him to conclude that none other than God has real existence.

In this psychological mood, Hayy comes across someone resembling him on the island, upon which he becomes astounded on the one hand and feels happy for not being alone in the world of existence on the other. The person he notices is Asal/Absal, who, leaving his own community to seek a life of solitude, sailed to this unmanned island.

The two become friends soon and Absal teaches Hayy to talk, after which the latter initiates exchanging ideas with the former. Absal becomes astonished by Hayy's having attained the truths on his own which the former had from books, and even realizes that Hayy is more competent than himself. When Absal talks to Hayy

about the community that he left, the latter wishes to call that community to the truth he himself obtained. However, Absal cannot tell Hayy that it would be of no use and so they travel together to the island where Salaman, Absal's friend, is governor. Hayy, true to his name, wishes to revive the community of this island. Nevertheless the community vehemently opposes Hayy because of the fact that people have lost their sound nature due to their whim and fancy. Thereafter Hayy and Absal return to their island to resume the life they once experienced. With the end of the story, Ibn Tufayl begins to discuss the rationale behind why Hayy was rejected by the community. The work ends with symbolic references to the verses concerning people's searching for truth and then turning their back to the truth<sup>17</sup>.

### The Modes of Coming into Existence

In Islamic faith, there are three modes, based on the Qur'an, of coming into existence for a human being:

1. The coming into existence of Adam with no parents by virtue of forming clay in a particular shape and then the introduction of divine spirit by God into that molded structure.
2. The coming into existence of Jesus from a mother's womb through the breathing of logos into him with the mediation of Gabriel (Jibril).
3. The mode of biological procreation/conception by means of parents.

Out of these three, Ibn Tufayl takes up the first and the third modes of coming into existence.

### The Mode of Adam's Coming into Existence

"... in a pocked of earth, on that island, over the years, a mass of clay worked until hot and cold, damp and dry were blended in just the proper way, their strengths perfectly balanced. This fermented mass of clay was quite large, and parts of it were in better equilibrium than others, more suited than the rest for becoming human gametes. The midmost part was the best proportioned and bore the most perfect equivalence to the makeup of a man. The clay labored and churned, and in the vicious mass there formed what looked like bubbles in boiling water.

In the very middle formed a tiny bubble divided in half by a delicate membrane and filled by a gaseous body [*jism latif hawa'i*], optimally proportioned for what it was to be. With it at that moment joined 'the spirit which is [from] God's [command=*amr Allah*] in a bond virtually indissoluble...'"<sup>18</sup>

The fermentation of the clay takes a long time, as is pointed out above. The Qur'an says: "*Has there not been over man a long period of time, when he was nothing – (not even) mentioned?*"<sup>19</sup> Moreover, we see how the clay evolves into a human being: "... it is He that has created you in diverse stages"<sup>20</sup> and "God produced you from

*the earth like a vegetable growth.*"<sup>21</sup> With respect to the creation of human beings out of clay, the following verses are important: "He who has made everything which He has created most good: He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay. Then He made his seed from a draught of despised fluid. But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you hearing and sight and feeling. Little is that you give thanks!"<sup>22</sup>; "He created man of clay like the potter's"<sup>23</sup>; "Verily We created man from a product of wet earth. Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed. ... So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators!"<sup>24</sup>

The breathing of spirit into the body is described by Ibn Tufayl as follows: "When this spirit was linked with that chamber all the powers of the latter submitted totally to it, bowing to its sway according to God's command."<sup>25</sup> The related verse reads: "So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of My Spirit, do fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him."<sup>26</sup> What attracts our attention here is that where Ibn Tufayl's text reads "*wa sajadat lahu*", the Qur'an has "*lahu sajjidin*", that is, both text employ the word 'prostration.'<sup>27</sup> According to Ibn Tufayl, "... this spirit [God's command] emanates continuously from God –glory be to Him. It is analogous to the sunlight [*bi manzilat nur al-shams*] that constantly floods the [world]<sup>28</sup>. This is also the idea on which Ibn Tufayl bases his theory of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of existence). It is Ibn Sina who first put forth this notion in Islamic culture, which was later embraced by al-Ghazali as well. The source of this idea of constant divine emanation, which Ibn Sina calls 'providence', is the Qur'anic verse that reads "*Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.*"<sup>29</sup>

### **Allusion to the Story of Moses**

As we have pointed out above, the third mode of coming into existence is the biological procreation through a mother and a father. The narration of events concerning this mode is noticeable as it brings to mind other events in history. Ibn Tufayl's description in brief is as follows:

There is an island governed by a king who has a beautiful sister: Although the sister is old enough to get married, the king would not allow it because he could not find someone fitting. But the sister loves one of her relatives named Yaqzan and marries him secretly in accordance with the customs of the community. They name their child Hayy. In order to keep their marriage secret and to prevent their child from getting killed, they find the following solution: having nursing the child, the mother puts him in an ark which they sealed it tight so it does not sink, and brings it to the coast. Even though the possibility that the child might drown agonizes her, there is nothing much she can do. It is only God that she can trust. So she prays to God thus: "Almighty God, you formed my baby when it was nothing, a thing without a name. You fed him in the darkness of my womb and saw that he was smooth and even and perfectly formed. In fear of that wicked tyrant I entrust him

to your care. I beg you shed your bounty upon him. Be with him. Never leave him, most merciful God."<sup>30</sup>

This narration resembles in many ways the story of the birth and growing up of Moses as occurs in the Qur'an. As is known, when Moses was born, the Pharaoh has a dream in which he sees a male child born in that year oust him. Then he decides to have all the male children of the Israelites who are born that year killed. So Moses mother, in order to save her newborn, puts him in an ark and casts him at night into the dark waters of the Nile. The Qur'an explains this as follows: *"And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying: Suckle him and, when you fear for him, then cast him into the river and fear not nor grieve. Lo! We shall bring him back unto you and shall make him (one) of Our messengers."*<sup>31</sup>; *"But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith), so that she might remain a (firm) believer."*<sup>32</sup>

To return to the story of Hayy, when the water rises and then recedes, the infant reaches the coast of the island in tact. Feeling hungry, the infant starts crying. His cry is heard by a doe that has been wandering about in pain for losing her fawn. The doe, feeling sorry for the infant, offers her udder to him, letting him drink her milk<sup>33</sup>.

Back to the story of Moses, as is known, the Pharaoh's wife, because of her passion for children resulting from not being able to bear male child, decided to keep the baby in the ark driven ashore. She suggests to the Pharaoh that he be their own baby, just as the doe, taking the baby for her own fawn, embraced an infant that is not of his kind. The Qur'an tells us that: *"The wife of Pharaoh said: '(Here is) joy of the eye, for me and for you: slay him not. It may be that he will be use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' And they perceived not (what they were doing)!"*<sup>34</sup>

The doe begins to raise Hayy as if he were her own fawn. They get used to each other and become inseparable<sup>35</sup>. The doe constantly warms him up with her own heat, cuddles him, and swaddles him with the clothes found in the ark. Hayy grows up, feeding on the doe's milk until he is at the age of two<sup>36</sup>. Ibn Tufayl's specifying Hayy's two years of suckling is also in accordance with the Qur'an: *"Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling"*<sup>37</sup>; *"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and his weaning is in two years..."*<sup>38</sup>

### **Familiarizing Himself with the Environment**

Over the time, Hayy, imitating his mother doe, starts making sounds like hers. He does that so apply that his sound cannot be distinguished from that of a doe<sup>39</sup>. With this Ibn Tufayl wanted to suggest that the source of human knowledge is his observations. For the Qur'an says: *"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that you may give thanks (to Allah)."*<sup>40</sup>

Hayy b. Yaqzan observed the differences between him and the animals, but he could not think of a cause. "And the fact that the private parts of an animal were better concealed than his own disturbed him greatly and made him very unhappy ... and had finally lost hope of making up the deficiencies which so disturbed him he took some broad leaves from a tree and put them on front and back. Then out of plaits of palms and grass he made something like a belt about his middle and fastened leaves to it."<sup>41</sup> He felt the need to cover himself because of the sense of shame in his nature. The verses to which Ibn Tufayl alludes here talk about Adam's and his spouse's covering their private parts with leaves: "*Then he [Satan] caused them to fall by deceit; so when they tasted of the tree, their evil inclinations became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden; ...*"<sup>42</sup>

Having observed his environment, Hayy noticed that each species of animals and plants have numerous members. This analogy, he thought there must be a species of which he is a member. So he searched for beings like himself but could not find any<sup>43</sup>. The Qur'an states: "*There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (they are) communities like you*"<sup>44</sup> and "*And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are signs for those who know.*"<sup>45</sup>

Hayy later no longer needed natural tools and weapons like those of animals that he once envied and wanted to have, since he now could think of and manufacture weapons by his hands<sup>46</sup>. For he was the vicegerent on the earth and the most handsome of all creation. The Qur'an describes Adam this way: "*We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation.*"<sup>47</sup>

His observations and explorations now enable him to take advantage of his superiority to other creatures. Toward the end of his age of 21, he learns to tame animals and benefit from them. He consumes their meat and makes outfits and shoes from their hides. He uses them to carry his things, and learns from swallows how to build a structure<sup>48</sup>. The manner in which Hayy benefits from animals resembles the ways the Qur'an mentions about them. Hayy figures out through reason the meaning of the verses of the Divine Book, which encourages human beings to think, and arrives at the same conclusions. Regarding this point, we have following verses: "*It is God who made cattle for you, that you may use some for riding and some for food; (many) benefits you have from them –and that you may satisfy by their means a need that is in your breasts, and may be born upon them as upon their ship*"<sup>49</sup>; "*And He created the cattle for you; you have in the warm clothing and (many) advantages, and of them do you eat.*"<sup>50</sup>

### **Last Moments with the Doe**

With the passage of time, when the doe grows old and weak, Hayy now starts to

look after her, taking her to rich pastures and bringing her sweet and delicious fruits<sup>51</sup>. This is the natural course of an unspoiled human nature. Hayy's taking care of the doe that once took care of him and nourished him when she was old is in complete congruity with this Qur'anic ordinance: *"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents;"*<sup>52</sup> and *"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word. And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: O my Lord! Have compassion on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little."*<sup>53</sup>

Despite Hayy's rigorous care, the time comes and the doe dies. For a long while Hayy does not understand the nature of death. In order to revive the doe-mother, he does every examination and experiment that he can think of on her body. However, when he fails, his interest in the body decreases and becomes baffled at not knowing what to do with the body. Then he sees two crows bicker, until one kills the other and scratched a hole in the ground, in which it tosses the dead bird and covers it up with dirt. Upon witnessing this, Hayy thought to himself: *"How good is what the crow did to bury the dead one ... It would be more appropriate for me to do the same thing for my mother."*<sup>54</sup> So he digs a hole and buries the doe's body in it.

This particular plan of events in Ibn Tufayl's narrative suggests the application of the Qur'anic story of Able and Cain to Hayy and the doe. When Cain, who murdered his brother Able out of jealousy, was at a loss as to what to do with the dead body, God shows him the fighting crows: *"Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother. He said: Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother? So he became of those who regret."*<sup>55</sup>

### **From the World to God/From the Created to the Creator**

Hayy took interest in everything on the island on which he lived by himself, contemplated on things and focused his thoughts to arrive at a conclusion. He examined all things in the world of generation and corruption: air, plants, minerals, stones earth, their species and qualities, water, vapor, snow, hail, smoke, dry and damp. He observed in each of them varying characteristics and qualities, various effects, and modes that are either compatible or incompatible with each other<sup>56</sup>. He was looking at things from a different perspective now, investigating them and making inferences about them. The unique source of these accomplishments of Hayy was his pure reason, functioning in accordance with its nature, devoid of preconceptions. To this fact, God attracts our attention: *"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, -there are indeed signs for men of understanding."*<sup>57</sup>

The unique quality that distinguished Hayy from other creatures and made him superior to them is the ability of thinking which was granted to humanity by God. This ability is the most valuable and significant source in terms of cracking open the door leading to the truth of things: *"Verily in these things there are signs for those who understand!"*<sup>58</sup>; *"Lo! Herein is indeed a portent for people who reflect"*<sup>59</sup>; *"Sure We have created everything according to a measure"*<sup>60</sup>; *"It is Allah who alternates the night and the day: verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision!"*<sup>61</sup>

Hayy's observation of the world led him to such a conclusion that these entities in the world must be an effect of a most perfect and willing Agent. For Hayy, the whole universe including heavens, stars, whatever lies above and beneath them, all that is a product and creation of that Agent<sup>62</sup>. He who is conversant with the Qur'an would easily notice the source of these thoughts. The Qur'an says: *"Say: Yea! By my Lord, the Knower of the unseen, it shall certainly come upon you; not the weight of an atom becomes absent from Him, in the heavens or in the earth, and neither less than that nor greater, but (all) is in a clear book."*<sup>63</sup>; *"To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth"*<sup>64</sup>; *"Unto God belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth"*<sup>65</sup>; *"The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, He says unto it only: Be! And it is."*<sup>66</sup> That it is the duty of the unimpaired reason to find its Agent, based on what is in the world, is stated in the Qur'an thus: *"Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Are those who know equal with those who know not?"*<sup>67</sup>

After a series of observations and investigations, Hayy comprehended that every body is composed of matter and form. While the matter did not change at all, the form is in constant change. As the form changes, the states of things also change. Body takes on new modes of being due to the form. Hence Hayy thought at first that the cause of this change is the form<sup>68</sup>, but later realized that all actions that he once ascribed to the form are in fact not because of it but because of an Agent that employs the form as a means. Regarding this awareness of Hayy, Ibn Tufayl refers the reader to this verse: *"It is not you who slew them; it was Allah: when you threw, it was not your act, but Allah's: in order that He might test the believers by a gracious trial from Himself; for Allah is He who hears and knows all things."*<sup>69</sup> Then, who bestow the form? The Qur'an answers this question thus: *"He is Allah the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner."*<sup>70</sup> If it is God who gives form, then it is certainly God who is the creator of all actions, as Ibn Tufayl accentuates.

### Following Abraham's Footsteps

"None of the physical things around him was exempt from change, thus none could exist without there being a cause of all this change. Seeing that this was the case, Hayy left behind all these things and turned his mind to the heavenly bodies. ... He knew that the heavens and all the stars in the skies were bodies because without exception they were extended in three dimensions, and whatever is

always extended in three dimensions is a body, therefore they were all bodies<sup>71</sup>. Thus he realized through a strong intuition that there must be something other than corporeality to comprehend the Necessary Existent.

God tell us about the similar adventure of Abraham: *"Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty. When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star. He said: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: I love not things that set. ... Lo! I have turned my face toward Him who created the heavens and the earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters."*<sup>72</sup> Abraham was a person who sought intellectual satisfaction when it comes to metaphysical issues. The Qur'anic statements regarding resurrection are noteworthy in this respect. We understand that one must overcome the deceptive things obstructing the ways to finding the Creator of the universe and believing Him. That is why profound thinking over existence always indicates the same point in a direct course.

Hayy conviction that God rules the heavens and whatever therein was firm. It was God who regulates the movements of the heavens, makes the Sun, the Moon and the stars set in the west and returns them to the east: *"Allah causes the sun to rise in the East..."*<sup>73</sup>; *"And He it is who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. They float, each in an orbit."*<sup>74</sup> At the end, Hayy made the following judgment about the world: *"The world could not come into existence out of nothing and needed a Creator to bring it about."*<sup>75</sup> This Creator could not be apprehended through senses: *"Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware."*<sup>76</sup>

Having considered all deficient qualities, Hayy concluded that "God is free of all deficiencies. His God is one and is absolute existence. Only He is the perfection (*kamal*), completeness (*tamam*) and beauty (*husn*). He is splendor, He is power, and He is knowledge. He is He<sup>77</sup>, and *"Everything will perish save His face."*<sup>78</sup>

Hayy's contemplation of existence and his ascribing it in conclusion to a creator led him to such a level that "his eye fell on nothing without immediately detecting in it the signs of His workmanship- then instantly his thoughts would shift from craft to Craftsman, deepening his love of Him."<sup>79</sup>

The only being that he particularly focused on in his search for the Creator was his own self and he focused his attention on himself. The more he explored his true self the more his thinking of his Creator distracted him from all others. It became essential for Hayy to ponder the world and all that there is in it. At the end, the best method he found was to intimately feel the Creator by virtue of thinking Him constantly<sup>80</sup>. We think that this psychological mood of Hayy is best described by the following verses: *"Therefore, when you are free, still labour hard. And to your Lord turn (all) your attention"*<sup>81</sup>; *"Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:*

*Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory be to you; save us then from the chastisement of the fire.”<sup>82</sup>*

As Hayy’s immersion in thinking the existence and the Creator became intensified, when this state was interrupted, he would feel nervous and think that life became meaningless. At such times, he would endeavor as much as possible to become like Him by attaining divine attributes; He would yield to His commands and resolves not to disobey His will, and totally submit to Him<sup>83</sup>.

### **As If in the Cave of Hira**

Now let us now read the following statements and then compare them with the experiences that the Prophet Muhammad had in the Cave of Hira:

“He would stay in his cave, sitting on the stone floor, head bent, eyes shut, oblivious to all objects of the senses and urges of the body, his thoughts and all his devotion focused on the Being whose existence is [Necessary] alone and without rival. When any alien thought sprang to his imagination, Hayy would resist it with all his might and drive it out of his mind.”<sup>84</sup> In the end, all other existents as well as his own self would disappear: he would dissolve into annihilation, uttering the words of the One, the True Being (*al-wāhid al-haqq al-mawjud*), which are identical with Himself: “*Whose is the sovereignty this day? It is God’s, the One, the Almighty.*”<sup>85</sup>

“Hayy understood His words and heard [His] summons... Not [speaking and not] knowing how to speak did not prevent him from understanding. Drowned in ecstasy, he witnessed ‘what no eye has seen or ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.’”<sup>86</sup> These statements are remarkable in that they remind us of the Prophet Muhammad’s psychological mood prior to and at the time when he received the first revelation in the cave of Hira. Here we are given the impression that it is as if the attainment of truth were only possible through following the guidepost of the Prophet, the champion of the truth.

### **Manner of Exploiting Things**

Hayy first determines which kinds of food are readily available, then decides on the amount he would eat. If all the variety of food is readily available, then he would choose with care the one that would bring about the least opposition to acts of the Creator. But he would not eat the seeds of the fruits nor harm them, but throw them into rocky and barren fields so they would not become wasted. At the times when it is hard for him to find sufficient vegetables and fruits, he would exploit meat and eggs, preferring the ones most abundant in an effort not to endanger the species. He was careful to consume only to the extent that hunger would not harm his body and not to exceed that amount<sup>87</sup>.

As is known, Islam ascribes much importance to the favor and boon God created. Nothing may be wasted and exploited in excess, because human beings will be questioned about everything they have and make use of. Moreover, it is impera-

tive to be moderate in consumption of food and drink and to appreciate them. God says in the Qur'an: "... *Eat of the fruit thereof when it fruits, and pay the due thereof upon the harvest day, and be not prodigal. Lo! God loves not the prodigals*"<sup>88</sup>; "*O children of Adam! ... and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant*"<sup>89</sup>; "... *and do not squander wastefully. Surely the squanderers are the fellows of the Satans and the Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.*"<sup>90</sup>

Highly considerate about natural blessings, Hayy was also compassionate and sensitive to nature. He treated everything, be it animate or inanimate, as if they had a soul. He was fixing the nature that is about to corrupt and taking pleasure from rescuing feeble animals from a difficult position they were in. For he knew that everything was brought about by God; everything must be in the best possible way so that it becomes worthy of God.

In the fiction of *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, there is a sense of friendliness to nature that the destroyers of the nature today cannot understand and the environmentalists cannot imagine. He saw the nature and its contents as God's blessings and was aware that they all are only entrusted to us: "If he noticed that a plant cut off from the sun, he would, if possible, remove what was screening it. ... If he saw a plant dying for lack of water, he would water it as often as he could. When he saw an animal attacked by a predator, caught in a tangle, or stuck by a thorn, or with anything harmful in its eye or ear, or under pressure of hunger or thirst, Hayy did all he could to alleviate the situation and gave it food and water. Chancing to see an animal or plant's water supply cut off by a fallen rock or a fragment swept away from the overhanging riverbank, he would always clear away the obstacle."<sup>91</sup>

As I mentioned before, Hayy felt unease when he first encountered Absal, who came to the island to explore the esoteric aspect of the Book, but then his realizing that he was not the only one in the world made him feel glad.

### Getting to Know the Human Being

Soon Absal teaches Hayy to talk. Then Hayy tells Absal all about his intellectual adventure on the island. The way in which he attained to the divine and discovered the truth attracts Absal's attention, because the latter witnesses that all the fundamentals of faith that he believes, such as God, the angels, the prophets, and the afterlife, were all discovered and comprehended by Hayy. Thus he understands the esoteric or experiential truth of the meaning of the Book by way of what Hayy explains to him. His inner eye opens and profound thinking begins. The place of the external meanings of his beliefs within reality becomes apparent to him.

As a matter of fact, this is Ibn Tufayl's primary goal in this tale, viz., to show that the knowledge, beliefs, and sensibilities that Hayy achieved by virtue of his unspoiled nature are entirely compatible with the revealed knowledge. The tradition of Islamic faith has never been stranger to this notion. Especially the imperativeness

of finding God and the afterlife through reason was also enunciated by Imam al-Maturidi, a significant representative of Ahl al-Sunnah, several centuries earlier than Ibn Tufayl. Hayy, i.e., the philosopher goes from the nature to the divine by using his sound intellectual abilities. And the knowledge that God gives directly appears to have been checked with the knowledge obtained through that experience. The external knowledge that is not discovered through experience and has not yet reached certainty amounts to a position which is subordinate to the truth/knowledge that is obtained by means of experience. That is why Hayy decides to go to the island which Absal's friend governs according to the external meaning of the Book. Despite Absal's advice to the contrary, Hayy is confident that he would invite the people of the Island, where Salaman is king, to discover the truth, but he does not find what he hoped for. Nevertheless, at the end, he gets to know human beings and ranks them thus:

### Ranks of People

I. The philosophers: they express what is divine with knowledge.

II. The Sufis: they experience what is in the divine realm. When it comes to expressing their states, they fail and make grave mistakes. Their experiences can only be explicated by the philosopher's lexicon.

III. The jurists: they understand and explain religion and shape the individual and societal life according to its external meaning. However, they are far from being gratifying.

IV. The masses: they constitute the bottom rank in comprehending the truth. For them the truth is the gratification of the avaricious aspect of a human being, and obtaining benefits for themselves in any case.

Ibn Tufayl points to the fact that most people have no relation with religion and that this lack of relation causes banalities in their life, and describes the states of such people by alluding to Qur'anic verse. When Hayy arrives at Absal's homeland and sees how far the people are from the divine truth, he depicts the picture thus: *"each party rejoices in that which is with itself"*<sup>92</sup>; *"They had made their desire their god"*<sup>93</sup>; and they were distracted by greed until they went down to their graves"<sup>94</sup>; *"They are engulfed in ignorance. That which they have earned is rust upon their hearts"*<sup>95</sup>; *"Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them."*<sup>96</sup> When he saw that *"all but a very few of them adhered to their religion only for the sake of this world. And flung away works, no matter how light and easy, sold them for a bad price, distracted from the thought of God by business, heedless of the Day when hearts and eyes will be turned inwards"*<sup>97</sup>, Hayy clearly understood that *"to address to the masses in a clear and open way is not possible"*<sup>98</sup> and says to himself; *"Then, as for him who rebelled and prefers the life of this world; then surely the hell, that is the abode."*<sup>99</sup>

"What weariness is heavier, what misery more overburdening than recounting all you do from the time you get up to the time you go to bed without finding a single action that did not amount to seeking one of these vile, sensory aims: money making, pleasure seeking, satisfying some lust, venting rage, saving face, performing religious rites for the sake of honor, or just to save your neck! All these are only 'cloud upon cloud over a deep sea.'<sup>100</sup> And one cannot expect to achieve a fine place in the hereafter when one has a history of doing these vile things. For only those who believe and do good works beneficial for the hereafter can taste felicity in the next world<sup>101</sup>.

The conclusion is that there is no point in expecting more out of such people than the observance of fasting, prayers, giving alms, etc.<sup>102</sup>. Because there is a man for every task and everyone belongs to the life for which he was created<sup>103</sup>. "*Such has been the course of Allah that has indeed run before, and you shall not find a change in Allah's course.*"<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion

We must point out first that this tale is completely original as it is the first example of its kind. And, one cannot expect from Ibn Tufayl, insofar he is a Muslim, to advance a view that is remote from the beliefs of the Muslims and independent of their Book. He showed in this novel that thought and life, the Book and the experience, and knowledge and deed/practice entail each other and corroborate one another. He demonstrated how natural the relationship between God, humans, and the world is so subtly that no one, whether Jewish or Christian, disputed the feasibility of what is narrated in this story. For Ibn Tufayl, while showing the rational way of knowing God, hinted at the traditional/religious way which is in the background of the former way. That what is demonstrated rationally is the disclosure of the divine Book is a great achievement of Ibn Tufayl on the one hand, and also the evidence of how congruous the divine Book is with the inborn sound human reason on the other. This tale proves that "there is a complete harmony between the unconditioned reason and the properly and profoundly understood religion."<sup>105</sup> *Hayy b. Yaqzan* is also a story of a human being's achieving the highest levels of gnosis through inborn rational power without having any external aids or studying under any mentor or consulting the Book<sup>106</sup>.

There is a vast amount of studies on Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, most of which focus mainly on the philosophical, mystical, and scientific aspect of it. We on the other hand dwelled on the fact that both the whole thematic structure of the story and the ideas placed therein have the Qur'an as their sources.

Ibn Tufayl's accomplishment in the tale led some Christians to appropriate the story, so much so that according to the construing of some of the themes by, for example, el-Ahwani and Carra de Vaux in terms of Christian doctrines and tradition, *Hayy* becomes the son of God just like Christ of Christianity<sup>107</sup>. Thus it is sug-

gested that the central theme of this investigation of Ibn Tufayl was Christianity. Here there is an attempt to draw parallels between the uncovering the truth by Jesus, the son of God in the Christian faith, and that of Hayy. However, as can be seen throughout this article, the main source of Ibn Tufayl and the origin of his inspiration is the divine Book that he himself believed. His articulating the truth in a universal language and in a manner that no sound-minded person would object caused a number of people of religion to desire and appropriate this truth to be their own.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Al-Marrâkuṣī, Abd al-Wāhid b. Ali al-Tamimī, *el-Mu'jib fī Talhīs Aḥbārī'l-Maghrib*, (Kahire 1324), p. 158; this reference taken from Ömer Mahir Alper; "İbn Tufayl'in Hayatı ve Felsefesi", (unpublished doctoral dissertation, İstanbul 1993, p. 18).
- <sup>2</sup> Alper; *ibid*, p. 13. In this respect, we would like to state that Ibn Tufayl, like his predecessors al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Bajjah, is a person who is well-versed in religious and philosophical sciences and who made effort as much as possible to act upon them. That is, he is a philosopher who deemed it fundamental to reach the Truth in speech and the good in action, in accordance with the definition of *hikmah* (wisdom).
- <sup>3</sup> Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, ed. Albert Nasrî Nader, (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 2001), p. 18. This work will henceforth be abbreviated as *Hayy*.
- <sup>4</sup> Sami S. Hawi, "İbn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan, Its Structure, Literary Aspects, and Method", *Islamic Culture*, v. 47 (1973), p. 196.
- <sup>5</sup> Hawi, *ibid*, p. 201.
- <sup>6</sup> Sami Hawi, "İbn Tufal, His Motives for the use of narrative form and his method of concealment in Hayy b. Yaqzan", *The Muslim World*, v. 64, p. 326.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibn Tufayl employs the "method of self-teaching" which the Western call "autodidact". See İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *İslâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, (İstanbul 1995, p. 262.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibn Tufayl explains in detail how the sound innate reason becomes corrupt at the end of his work where he tells us about the types of human beings.
- <sup>9</sup> A.-M. Goichon, "Hayy b. Yaqzan", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, (New Edition), v. III, 1971, p. 334.
- <sup>10</sup> *Hayy*, p. 89.
- <sup>11</sup> *Hayy*, p. 94.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.
- <sup>14</sup> Yet we should point out immediately that Ibn Tufayl did not eschew from putting forward ideas opposing Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali, whom he considered the sources of his views. Especially his siding with the philosophers on the issues of the eternity of the world and the resurrection, about which al-Ghazali charged the philosophers with unbelief, and his statement that God's attributes are identical with Him show his self-confidence about his thoughts.
- <sup>15</sup> Garcia Gomez asserted regarding the birth of Hayy that the version containing the king and his sister is taken from the tale entitled *Qissat dhu al-Qarnayn wa Hikayat al-Sanam wa al-Malik wa Bintuhu*. This tale dates back to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. See Hasan Mahmut Abbas, *Hayy b. Yaqzan wa Robinson Crusoe*, (Beirut 1983), p. 57 (Taken from Alper; *Ibn Tufayl'in Hayatı ve Eserleri*, p. 37).
- <sup>16</sup> Looking at the scenario as a whole, we understand from his stating at the end of the story that Absal took Hayy to his island that Ibn Tufayl accepts the report concerning the second mode of coming into existence as the basis of his story.
- <sup>17</sup> We should highlight a point that we took notice of in the text: There is a similarity between the Qur'anic references that Ibn Tufayl makes in his classification of evil-doers and the ones that Ibn Sina makes when the latter mentions the characteristics of vicious people in his own *Hayy b. Yaqzan*. That means that Ibn Tufayl both took the title of his epistle from Ibn Sina and reached ideas similar to those of Ibn Sina with

regard to the issue at hand.

- <sup>18</sup> *Hayy*, p. 81. English translation of this passage is taken from Lenn Evan Goodman's *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan* (Los Angeles: gee tee bee, 1996), p. 106. Insertions in brackets are mine.
- <sup>19</sup> Qur'an, 76:1.
- <sup>20</sup> Qur'an: 71:14.
- <sup>21</sup> Qur'an, 71:17.
- <sup>22</sup> Qur'an, 32:7-9.
- <sup>23</sup> Qur'an, 55:14; cf. 15:26.
- <sup>24</sup> Qur'an, 23:12-14; cf. 77:21, 22.
- <sup>25</sup> *Hayy*, s. 30; Goodman's translation, op. cit., p. 107.
- <sup>26</sup> Qur'an, 15:29; cf. 38:72.
- <sup>27</sup> Here we deem it useful to makes the following remark: The angel's prostration to Adam is mentioned in two different occasion in the Qur'an. Prostration is demanded of angels first when Adam was taught by God all the "names" and secondly when God breathes into Adam from His own "spirit". It is our contention that this prostration was demanded of angels because of the divine state that originated by virtue of the fact that the human being thus became the "bearer of divine revelation" and "divine spirit", which by implication means that the prostration was made to God not to the clayish aspect of Adam.
- <sup>28</sup> *Hayy*, p. 29. Goodman's translation, p. 107. Insertions in brackets are mine.
- <sup>29</sup> Qur'an, 24:35.
- <sup>30</sup> *Hayy*, p. 28. Goodman's translation, p. 105.
- <sup>31</sup> Qur'an, 28:7, 10; 20:39.
- <sup>32</sup> Qur'an, 28:10.
- <sup>33</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 29, 32.
- <sup>34</sup> Qur'an, 28:9.
- <sup>35</sup> *Hayy*, p. 32.
- <sup>36</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 33, 34.
- <sup>37</sup> Qur'an, 2:233.
- <sup>38</sup> Qur'an, 31:14.
- <sup>39</sup> *Hayy*, p. 33.
- <sup>40</sup> Qur'an, 16:78.
- <sup>41</sup> *Hayy*, p. 34. Goodman's translation, p. 110.
- <sup>42</sup> Qur'an, 7:22.
- <sup>43</sup> *Hayy*, p. 34.
- <sup>44</sup> Qur'an, 6:38.
- <sup>45</sup> Qur'an, 30:22.
- <sup>46</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 34, 35.
- <sup>47</sup> Qur'an, 17:70.
- <sup>48</sup> *Hayy*, p. 35.
- <sup>49</sup> Qur'an, 40: 79, 80.
- <sup>50</sup> Qur'an, 16:5.
- <sup>51</sup> *Hayy*, p. 35.
- <sup>52</sup> Qur'an, 31:14.
- <sup>53</sup> Qur'an, 17:23, 24.
- <sup>54</sup> *Hayy*, p. 40.
- <sup>55</sup> Qur'an, 5:31.
- <sup>56</sup> *Hayy*, p. 45ff.
- <sup>57</sup> Qur'an, 3:190.
- <sup>58</sup> Qur'an, 13:4.
- <sup>59</sup> Qur'an, 16:11, 113.
- <sup>60</sup> Qur'an, 54:49.

- <sup>61</sup> Qur'an, 24:44.
- <sup>62</sup> *Hayy*, p. 63.
- <sup>63</sup> Qur'an, 34:3. This verse is cited by Ibn Tufayl himself in his own text. Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina too cited this verse in regard to the issue of God's knowledge of the world.
- <sup>64</sup> Qur'an, 3:109.
- <sup>65</sup> Qur'an, 3:189.
- <sup>66</sup> Qur'an, 2:117.
- <sup>67</sup> Qur'an, 39:9.
- <sup>68</sup> *Hayy*, p. 54 ff.
- <sup>69</sup> Qur'an, 8:17. See *Hayy*, p. 56. That God is the direct Cause/Agent of everything was elaborated on by al-Ghazali as well.
- <sup>70</sup> Qur'an, 59:24.
- <sup>71</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 56, 57, 70. Goodman's translation, p. 128.
- <sup>72</sup> Qur'an, 7:75-79.
- <sup>73</sup> Qur'an, 2:258.
- <sup>74</sup> Qur'an, 21:33.
- <sup>75</sup> *Hayy*, p. 63.
- <sup>76</sup> Qur'an, 6:103.
- <sup>77</sup> *Hayy*, p. 64; the Qur'an, 28:88.
- <sup>78</sup> Qur'an, 28:88.
- <sup>79</sup> *Hayy*, p. 65. Goodman's translation, p. 135.
- <sup>80</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 66-70.
- <sup>81</sup> Qur'an, 94:7, 8.
- <sup>82</sup> Qur'an, 3:191.
- <sup>83</sup> *Hayy*, p. 73 ff.
- <sup>84</sup> *Hayy*, p. 80; Goodman's translation, p. 148.
- <sup>85</sup> *Hayy*, p. 80; the Qur'an, 40:16.
- <sup>86</sup> *Hayy*, p. 80. Goodman's translation, p. 149. Insertion in brackets are mine.
- <sup>87</sup> *Hayy*, p. 76.
- <sup>88</sup> Qur'an, 6:141.
- <sup>89</sup> Qur'an, 7:31.
- <sup>90</sup> Qur'an, 17:26-27.
- <sup>91</sup> *Hayy*, p. 78. Goodman's trans., p. 146.
- <sup>92</sup> Qur'an, 23:53.
- <sup>93</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 45:23 and 25:43: "Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?"
- <sup>94</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 102:1.
- <sup>95</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 83:14.
- <sup>96</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 2:7.
- <sup>97</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 3:184.
- <sup>98</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 24:37.
- <sup>99</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 79:37-39.
- <sup>100</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96; cf. Qur'an, 24:40; 19:72
- <sup>101</sup> *Hayy*, p. 96.
- <sup>102</sup> *Hayy*, p. 97.
- <sup>103</sup> *Hayy*, pp. 96-97; cf. Qur'an, 17:84.
- <sup>104</sup> *Hayy Akıl ve İtikad*