

THE MEANING OF THE QURAN

Vol. V

[Sūrah Dūnus, Hūd, Yūsuf and Ar-Ra'ad]
(ARABIC TEXT WITH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY)

By

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D̄unus (Jonah)

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YŪNUS (JONAH) یُونُسُ

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from V. 98, in which there is a reference to Prophet Yūnus (Jonah). The name, as usual, is symbolical and does not indicate that the Sūrah deals with the story of Prophet Jonah.

Place of Revelation

We learn from traditions, and this is supported by the contents of the Sūrah itself, that the whole of this Sūrah was revealed at Makkah. But there are some people who are of the opinion that some of its verses were revealed at Al-Madīnah. This is, however, a superficial view. The continuity of the theme clearly shows that this does not comprise isolated verses or discourses that were revealed at different times and on different occasions. On the contrary, it is, from the beginning to the end, a closely connected discourse which must have been revealed at one sitting. Besides this, the nature of its theme is itself a clear proof that the Sūrah belongs to the Makkan period.

Time of Revelation

We have no tradition in regard to the time of its revelation, but its subject-matter gives clear indication that it must have been revealed during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's residence at Makkah. For the mode of the discourse suggests that at the time of its revelation, the antagonism of the opponents of the Message had become so intense that they could not tolerate even the presence of the Holy Prophet and his followers among themselves, and that things had come to such a pass as to leave no hope that they would ever understand and accept the Message of the Prophet. This indicates that the last stage of the Prophet's life among those

people had come, and the final warning like the one in this Sūrah had to be given. These characteristics of the discourse are a clear proof that it was revealed during the last stage of the Movement at Makkah.

Another thing that determines more specifically the order of the sūrahs of the last stage at Makkah is the mention (or absence) of some open or covert hint about *Hijrat* (Emigration) from Makkah. As this Sūrah does not contain any hint whatsoever about this, it is a proof that it preceded those sūrahs which contain it.

Now that we have specified the time of its revelation, there is no need of repeating its historical background because that has already been stated in Sūrahs VI and VII.

Subject

This discourse deals with the invitation to the Message, admonition and warning. In the very introductory verses, the invitation has been extended like this:—

“The people consider it a strange thing that this Message is being conveyed by a human being and charge him with sorcery, whereas there is nothing strange in it nor has it any connection with sorcery or sooth-saying. It simply informs you of two realities. First, Allah, Who has created the universe and manages it, is, in fact, your Master and Lord, and He alone is entitled to your worship. The second reality is that after the life in this world, there will be another life in the Next World, where you shall have to render full account of the life of this world and be rewarded or punished according to whether you adopted the righteous attitude as required by Him after acknowledging Him as your Master, or acted against His will. Both of these realities, which the Messenger is presenting before you, are “realities” in themselves whether you acknowledge them as such or not. He is inviting you to accept these and regulate your lives in accordance with them; if you accept these, you will have a very blessed end; otherwise you shall meet with evil consequences.”

Topics

After the introduction, the following topics have been

dealt with in an appropriate order:—

(1) Proofs of the doctrines of *Tauhīd*, Providence and Life-after-death have been given by such arguments as may satisfy the minds and hearts of those who listen to the Message without prejudice and bigotry with the sole intention of safeguarding themselves against deviation and its evil results and not for the sake of seeking opportunities for useless discussions.

(2) Those misunderstandings which were (and always are) hindering people from accepting the doctrines of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter, have been removed and they have been warned to guard against those negligences that stand in their way.

(3) Those doubts have been removed and answers to those objections given which were being raised about the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and the Message brought by him.

(4) Graphic descriptions of the life in the Hereafter have been presented in order to warn the people beforehand so that they should mend their ways here and be not sorry afterwards for their conduct in this world.

(5) They have been admonished and warned that the life in this world is really a test and a trial, and that the time allowed for it is only up to the last moment of the earthly life, and that this is the only opportunity³ that shall be given to them for accepting the Message and achieving success in the test. Therefore, they should make the best use of the opportunity that has been provided for them by the appointment of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) for their guidance and obtain the true knowledge of the Reality from the Qurān that is being sent down to him. Otherwise, they shall be remorseful for ever and ever.

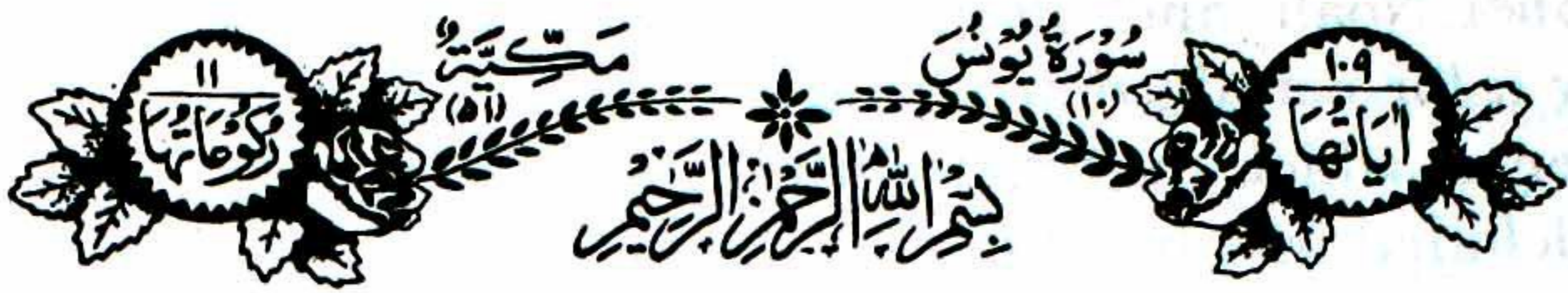
(6) Their attention has been drawn to some of their acts of manifest ignorance and deviation which were the direct result of discarding Divine Guidance from their lives.

In this connection, the story of Prophet Noah has been related in brief and that of Prophet Moses in detail in order to impress four things on the minds:—

First, "As your behaviour towards Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is like that of the peoples of

Prophet Noah and Prophet Moses towards them, you should know it for certain that you also shall meet with the same consequences which they met with." Secondly, "You should not be deluded into believing by the helpless and weak condition of the Prophet and his followers, you are witnessing today, that it will always remain like this. You should know that the same All-Powerful Allah Who supported Prophets Moses and Aaron, is supporting them and that He changes the circumstances in such a sudden and thorough manner that none can foresee it." Thirdly, "If you do not make use of the term that has been granted to you by Allah and mend your ways now, and postpone this to the last moment like Pharaoh, your repentance shall not be accepted." Lastly, the followers of the Holy Prophet have been reassured that they should not lose heart because of the severity of the circumstances created by their opponents, especially at the time when they themselves were in an utterly helpless condition. They have also been given instructions as to how they should carry on their Mission under those harsh conditions. Moreover, they have been warned to be on their guard against the kind of behaviour which was adopted by the Israelites, when they were rescued by Allah from the tyranny of the People of Pharaoh.

(7) At the end of the Sūrah, the Holy Prophet has been commanded to make a declaration to this effect: "This is the Creed and this is the rule of conduct that has been prescribed for me by Allah: no change can be made at all in this: whoso will accept this will do so for his own good and whoso will reject this will do so at his own peril."



الرَّتِّ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ ۝ آكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ الْمَنْزِلِ
 رَجُلٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ
 صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ قَالَ الْكٰفِرُونَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ۝ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ
 اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ عِلِّيِّينَ
 الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۗ مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ
 رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا
 إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
 بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شْرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا
 كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ
 مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذٰلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ
 يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا
 خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ ۝ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا
 يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
 عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ غٰفِلُونَ ۝ أُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ۝ إِنَّ
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ
 تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتٍ النَّعِيمِ ۝ دَعُوهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَ
 تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ۗ وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

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YŪNUS يُونُس

Verses 109

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Alif Lām Rā. These are the verses of the Book, which 1
is full of wisdom and knowledge.¹

Did it seem strange to the people that We should have 2
inspired a man from among themselves to warn the (neglect-
ful) people, and to give the Believers the good news that they
will have real honour and success with their Lord?² (Is this
the thing that) led the unbelievers to say, "This man is a
manifest enchanter?"³

The fact is that your Lord is the same Allah, Who created 3
the heavens and the earth in six days, then sat Himself upon
the Throne of His Kingdom, and is directing the affairs of
the universe.⁴ None can intercede with Him except after
His permission.⁵ That is Allah, your Lord: so worship Him.⁶
Will you not then understand?⁷

To Him you shall all return:⁸ this is the true and sure 4
promise of Allah. Indeed He originates creation and He will
bring it back to life⁹ so that He may recompense with perfect
justice those who believed and did righteous deeds. As for
those who disbelieved, they shall drink boiling water and
undergo a painful chastisement for their rejection of the
Truth.¹⁰

It is He Who gave the sun his brightness and the moon 5-6
her light, and ordained her phases precisely so that you may
calculate years and dates from this. Allah has not created all
this (for mere fun) but for a serious end. He makes His
Signs manifest for those people who possess knowledge. In
the alternation of the night and day and in all that Allah
has created in the heavens and the earth, surely there are
Signs for those who intend avoiding (deviation from the
Truth¹¹).

7-8 The fact is that the ultimate abode of those, who expect not to meet Us and are well pleased and satisfied with this worldly life and pay no heed to Our Signs, shall be Hell in consequence of the evils they earned (because of this erroneous creed and wrong conduct¹²).

9-10 And it is also a fact that, because of their faith, Allah will guide aright those who believe (sincerely in the Truths that have been presented in this Book) and do righteous deeds; and canals will be flowing underneath them in the Gardens of bliss.¹³ Therein their prayers will be, "Glory to Thee, O Lord," and their greeting, "Peace be to you," and the burden of their hymn will be, "Praise is for Allah alone, the Lord of the universe."¹⁴

1. This introductory verse contains a subtle answer to those foolish people who presumed that the discourses, which the Messenger was presenting as the Qurān, were nothing more than eloquent speeches, poetic lofty thoughts, and some predictions like those of the sooth-sayers. They are being warned that the Qurān is not what they supposed it to be but this is the Book of wisdom, and that if they did not pay due attention to it, they would deprive themselves of wisdom.

2. This question has been posed to impress on them that if they considered the matter coolly, they themselves would come to the conclusion that :

- (a) there is nothing strange in appointing a man to warn his fellow men of the consequences of neglecting the Message. For it is obvious that a man, and not a *jinn* or an angel or any other being, was the proper messenger for human beings.
- (b) there is nothing strange in it that the Creator and Lord of mankind should make arrangements for the guidance of erring human beings; nay, it would have been strange if He had made no such arrangements, and
- (c) there is nothing strange in this that real honour and success should come to those who accept the guidance and not to those who reject it.

3. They dubbed him "enchanter" but did not consider whether the epithet appropriately applied to him or not. It is obvious that the mere fact that he was moving the hearts and influencing the minds of the believers with his eloquence, was not a sufficient proof that he was using magic to achieve this object. And it is not difficult at all to distinguish rhetoric of a Messenger from that of an enchanter for these are quite distinct from each other in their natures, in the objectives for which they are used and in the effect they produce on the lives of the believers.

The irresponsible "enchanter" does not care at all whether what he utters is correct, just and righteous because his only object is to influence the hearts of the hearers in order to achieve his own unlawful ends. That is why he does not hesitate at all to utter any false, exaggerated or unjust thing, if it serves his purpose. For his only aim is to produce an emotional effect in order to deceive the people by using an artificially ornamented and exaggerated language rather than to state things of wisdom. As a result of this, his talk is contradictory, imbalanced and unsystematic. As his sole object is self-interest, he abuses his rhetoric for exploitation, or for sowing seeds of discord or for setting one party against the other. Therefore, the "enchanter" fails to produce any high moral effects on the lives of the people or to imbue them with any righteous thoughts or to urge them to noble deeds or to bring about any healthy change in their lives; nay, as a result of his "magic" the people begin to exhibit even worse qualities than they did before.

Thus it is implied that by the application of this criterion, the charge of the unbelievers that "This man is a manifest enchanter" is refuted, for it means to say to them, "You yourselves are witnessing that the talk of 'this person' is wise, systematic, balanced, right and just. Every word he utters is well-thought out and everything he says is most valuable and precious. His eloquence aims at nothing but reform of the people. There is not the least tinge of personal, family, national or any other worldly interest in his talk. His only intention and desire is to warn the people of the consequences of their negligence and to invite them to the way of their own good. Then consider the effects of his eloquence and you will find that they are quite different from those produced by the rhetoric of the 'enchanters'. The lives of all those who have been influenced by him have been so reformed that they have become models of high moral character and excellent conduct. Therefore, you should consider the matter and decide for yourselves whether he is an enchanter or a prophet."

4. This is to impress the fact that after creating the universe, Allah has not cut off connection with it, but has sat Himself upon His Throne and is practically directing and conducting and governing each and every part of it. The foolish people think that after creating the universe, Allah has left it to itself or to others to exploit it as they will. But the Qurān refutes this and says that Allah Himself is governing the whole of His creation and He has kept all the powers and the reins of government in His own hands and whatever is taking place in each and every part of the universe is happening with His command or permission. In short, He is not only the Creator but also the Ruler, Designer and Supporter of the universe, which is working in accordance with His will. (Please see also E.N.'s 40, 41 of AL-A'ARĀF.)

5. This is to emphasize the other side of the matter. He is All-Powerful and there is none who dare make even a recommendation to Him about anything not to speak of interfering with His management of affairs so as to cause any change in His decrees or in the making or marring

of anyone's fate. The most one can do is to make a supplication to Him but it all depends on His will to grant or reject it. There is none so powerful in His Kingdom as to have his own way in anything or to get his recommendations through anyhow.

6. After stating the bare fact that Allah alone is the Lord, people are being told the kind of conduct that 'fact' demands from them, that is, "When Allah alone is your Lord, you should worship Him alone." In this connection, it should also be noted that just as the Arabic word رَبُّ (Rab) implies three things—Providence, Supremacy and Sovereignty—likewise the Arabic word عِبَادَةٌ (Ibādat) also contains three corresponding implications: (1) worship, (2) servitude and (3) obedience:

(1) As Allah is his sole Providence, man should show his gratitude to Him by worshipping Him alone. He should pray and supplicate to Him and bow his head in reverence to Him and none else.

(2) As Allah is the only Supreme Being, man should behave like His servant and slave and should not adopt the attitude of independence towards Him nor should he subject himself to the mental or practical servitude of anyone else.

(3) As Allah is his sole Sovereign, man should obey His Commands, and follow His Law, and he should neither become his own sovereign nor should he acknowledge anyone else as his sovereign.

7. That is, "Will you not then understand the implications of the Reality that has been expounded? Will you not open your eyes and see the misunderstandings which have been misleading you into wrong ways opposed to Reality? Will you persist in them?"

8. This is the second basic principle of the teachings of every prophet; "You shall have to return to your Lord and render an account of all you did in this world." The first principle has been stated in the preceding verse: "Allah alone is your Lord: therefore worship Him only."

9. This sentence contains both a statement and its proof. The statement is, "Allah will again bring to life all human beings," and the proof is, "This is as easy for Allah as it was to create them first." The one who acknowledges that Allah has originated all creation (and who can deny this except those atheists who accepted the absurd theory of "Creation without a Creator" merely to get a plea for discarding the religion of the Christian clergy?) cannot consider this as impossible or irrational.

10. The reason why Allah will again bring the whole mankind to life is to reward the believers and to punish the disbelievers. After showing that this is possible to raise the dead, it is stated that it is absolutely necessary to fulfil the demands of common-sense and justice, for full justice cannot be done without this. Common-sense and justice demand that those who believe and do righteous deeds should be given their full rewards, and those who disbelieve and reject the Truth and do evil deeds,

should be duly punished. As every sensible and just person knows that this demand of justice is not fulfilled in its entirety, and cannot be fulfilled in this world, it is absolutely essential that the whole of mankind should again be brought to life for this purpose. (Please see also E.N. 30, AL-A'ARĀF and E.N. 105, HŪD.)

11. This is the third argument in proof of the doctrine of the life in the Hereafter. It is based on Allah's manifestations in the heavens and on the earth. The greatest and most manifest of these are the sun, the moon and the alternation of the night and day, for these are ever present before each and every human being. All these clearly show that the Creator of this great and vast universe is not a child who has made all this for mere fun and will break it up when he is satiated with it. These manifestations of His are a clear proof of the fact that the Creator is All-Wise, for there is a system, a wisdom, a design and a serious object in each and every particle of His creation. These seem, as it were, to say, "When you yourselves learn from the signs and manifestations of His wisdom that He is All-Wise, how can you, then, expect that He will not call man to account after granting him common-sense, moral feelings, independent responsibility and authority to exploit His endless resources, and that He will not reward those who make the right use of these and punish those who abuse them?"

Thus, it has become obvious that in VV. 4-6, three arguments have been given in their logical order to present the doctrine of the Hereafter:

(1) The fact of the origination of life in this world is a proof that life in the Next World is also possible.

(2) There must be life in the Hereafter, because it is essential for the recompense of the deeds that one does, and of the use or abuse one makes of the moral responsibilities that have been entrusted to man. Therefore, it is the demand of common-sense and justice that there must be another world in which one should bear the consequences of one's deeds, for this is not possible in this world.

(3) When common-sense and justice demand that there must be life in the Hereafter, this need will surely be satisfied, for the Creator of man and the universe is All-Wise, and it cannot be conceived that the All-Wise will not satisfy the demands of common-sense and justice.

A deep thinking will show that these are the only possible arguments for the proof of the life in the Hereafter and these suffice, too. After this the only thing that might be demanded in this connection is that it should be actually demonstrated before man to convince him that this thing is possible, necessary and demanded by the Wisdom of Allah. But it is obvious that this will not be done in this world for this is for the trial of man and not for recompense, and Allah wills to test whether man believes in the Hereafter without seeing it, merely by his reasoning on the right lines.

Besides this, the words, "He makes His Signs manifest for those people, who possess knowledge" and "...in all that Allah has created... there are Signs for those, who intend avoiding (deviations from the Truth)" are worthy of serious consideration. These words imply this: "Allah

has in His wisdom spread such signs in each and every manifestation of His as clearly point to the realities that are hidden behind them; but only those people can reach to those realities, who (a) free themselves from the prejudices of ignorance and acquire knowledge from the sources with which Allah has provided man for this purpose, and (b) have the intention of avoiding wrong ways and following the Right Way.”

12. This passage also contains both a statement and its proof. The statement is that those who reject the doctrine of the Hereafter shall inevitably go to Hell and its proof is that those who reject or pay no heed to this, commit such evil deeds as deserve nothing less than the fire of Hell. The fact which is supported by the experience of thousands of years, is that those who do not consider themselves responsible and accountable to God in the Hereafter, go astray into wrong ways for lack of any control over themselves, and commit immoralities and fill God's earth with tyranny, chaos and filth and thus merit Hell. This is inevitable. If a man leads his life on the presumption that there is no other life, he will have no fear that he shall have to render a full account of all his deeds in this world. Therefore his sole aim in this life will be to win, by hook or by crook, prosperity, happiness, fame and power in this world. Naturally these materialistic attitudes make people heedless of the Signs of Allah and mislead them into wrong ways that lead to Hell.

The above argument for the doctrine of the Hereafter is in its nature different from the previous three arguments. This is based on the knowledge gained by human experience while the former were based on rational reasoning. Though here only a hint has been given about it, the same has been stated in detail in other places in the Qurān. This is the argument in brief. Human beings cannot adopt individually or collectively the right attitude towards life unless the doctrine of accountability to God is deeply embedded in their hearts. The fact that human beings begin to behave erroneously, if and when their belief in this doctrine disappears or becomes weak, is borne out by a long experience. Had not the creed of the Hereafter been real, its acceptance or rejection would not have produced the results inevitably and continuously for centuries. The fact that the acceptance of a doctrine should have continuously produced right sort of results, and its denial wrong results, is a clear proof that it is real. Though the premises of the above argument and the conclusion drawn from these are clear and closely connected, there are some people who do not agree with this proposition. They argue their point like this. There are many instances of people who deny the Hereafter and base their moral philosophy and their rule of conduct on atheism and materialism : still they possess high moral characters and abstain from every sort of evil; in short, they are virtuous in their affairs and render great services to the people. But a little thinking will show that this is a weak argument. If we probe into the materialistic philosophies and systems, we shall find that all these lack solid foundations for the moral excellence and practical virtuous deeds; therefore they cannot

produce those qualities with which the atheists and the materialists are credited. Indeed no such motivating factors exist in those philosophies as may produce the qualities of righteousness, honesty, trust-worthiness, justice, compassion, generosity, sacrifice, sympathy, self-control, purity, the fulfilment of duties, obligations and pledges and the like. The only alternative to the doctrines of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter is "utilitarianism" which might become the basis for a practical moral system, for all the other philosophies are merely hypothetical and impracticable. It is quite obvious that the motivating power of utilitarianism is very limited because it is incapable of carrying a person farther than "utility" itself. Therefore the one who believes in this doctrine will consider a virtue a "virtue" only as long as it is useful to his own person, family, society etc., and will direct all his efforts towards promoting their welfare and happiness and will adhere to moral qualities only as long as they are conducive to his own good or to that of his own people. But he will discard these "virtues", when he is convinced that these will be harmful. That is why a utilitarian does not believe in absolute morality but adopts truth or falsehood, honesty or dishonesty, faithfulness or treachery, justice or injustice, in short, any virtue or vice that may suit the occasion and be useful for his own interests. The English people are the most appropriate example of utilitarian morality. Their example will serve our purpose as they are cited by its supporters to prove their proposition that one may possess a high moral character even though one were to deny the existence of God and the Hereafter for, they say, the English people in general are more truthful, more honest, more just and more trust-worthy than others though they are materialists; whereas the fact is that the English people provide the most appropriate practical proof of the instability of utilitarian character. Is it not a fact that the representatives of the English nation make a very poor show of their morality in regard to international affairs? They tell brazen-faced lies and are guilty of treachery, tyranny, injustice and dishonesty, and the whole nation backs them up as its champions. Had their morality been founded on sound bases, it could not have been possible that as individuals they should be truthful, honest, just, righteous and observe pledges, but as a nation they would discard all these moral values. This is a clear proof that these people do not believe in moral values as such but only if these are useful for their self-interest : otherwise they could not have adopted two contradictory positions as individuals and as a nation. Morality is morality only if it is absolute, otherwise it is a policy and expediency.

Nevertheless, if there be any up-holders of absolute morality from among the disbelievers of Allah and the Hereafter, they could not have got these virtues from the doctrine of utilitarianism but from those latent religious influences that might have remained embedded in their hearts without their conscious knowledge. Such a person is, in fact, indebted to religion for his moral excellences, though he be attributing these to

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وَكَوَيَعِّجِلُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَجْلُهُمْ
 فَنذُرُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّ
 الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا ۖ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ
 ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ كَانٌ لَمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَىٰ ضُرِّ مَسَّهُ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا
 كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا ۖ وَجَاءَتْهُمْ
 رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾
 ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾
 وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنِّي بِقُرْآنٍ
 غَيْرِ هَٰذَا أَوْ بَدِيلِهِ ۗ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِيٰ أَن أُبَدِّلَهُ مِن تِلْقَائِي نَفْسِي ۚ إِن
 اتَّبِعْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُؤْتَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِن عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾
 قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرِكُمْ بِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ
 عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَن أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ
 كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْقِدُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ
 اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ
 قُلْ اتَّخَذُوا اللَّهُ سَمًا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَ
 تَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا ۗ وَ
 لَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ
 يَقُولُونَ لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۗ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ فَانْتَظِرُوا ۗ
 إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَإِذَا أَدْقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّن بَعْدِ ضَرَأٍ ۚ

Had Allah¹⁵ hastened in dealing out evil to people as they 11-14
 hastened in asking good of the world, the term allowed to
 them for action would have been terminated long before this.
 (But this is not Our Way :) We let wander in their rebellion
 those people who do not expect to meet Us. Strange is the
 behaviour of man! When he is in affliction, he calls Us,
 standing or sitting or lying down, but when We remove his
 affliction from him, he behaves as if he had never called Us
 at the time when affliction came upon him. Thus the evil
 deeds of such transgressors have been made seeming fair to
 them. O mankind, We destroyed before you those communi-
 ties¹⁶ (which were in power in their time,) when they adopted
 the attitude of transgression,¹⁷ for their Messengers came to
 them with clear signs but they would not believe in them.
 This is how We recompense the criminals for their crimes.
 Now We have appointed you in their place on the earth so
 that We may test how you conduct yourselves.¹⁸

When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those 15-17
 who do not expect to meet Us say, "Bring another Qurān in
 its stead or make some amendment in it."¹⁹ O Muhammad,
 say to them, "It is not for me to make any alteration in it of
 my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me.
 Indeed, if I disobey my Lord, I fear the chastisement of a
 dreadful Day."²⁰ Say also, "Had Allah willed so, I would
 never have recited this Qurān to you, nor would I have told
 you anything (about its existence). I have already lived a life-
 time among you before its revelation. Do you not use your
 common-sense?²¹ And Who can be a greater sinner than the
 one who himself forges a lie and then ascribes it to Allah or
 falsifies²² His real Revelations? Indeed, criminals can never
 attain (true) success."²³

These people worship besides Allah those which can 18
 neither harm nor benefit them, and say, "These are our inter-
 cessors with Allah". O Muhammad, say to them, "Do you
 presume to inform Allah of that thing which He knows not to
 be either in the heavens or in the earth?"²⁴ He is absolutely
 free from and exalted above what they associate with Him.

In the beginning all the people were one community, but 19
 afterwards they invented different creeds and ways.²⁵ And

had not your Lord ordained a decree, that thing in which they differ would have been resolved.²⁶

20 As regards their saying, "Why has not a Sign been sent down to this Prophet from his Lord?"²⁷ tell them, "The unseen belongs wholly and solely to Allah. Well, wait (for it): I, too, shall wait with you."²⁸

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secularism and materialism, for he cannot point out anything, whatsoever, in them that might have motivated those virtues.

13. We should not pass cursorily over this verse and should consider it deeply in the order it has been presented :

(1) Why will they be given Gardens of bliss in the life of the Hereafter? This will be because they followed the Right Way in the life of this world and adopted the right ways in every aspect of life, both as individuals and as a community, and discarded the false and erroneous ways.

(2) How did they obtain at every step, at every turning and at every cross-road the correct criterion of judging between the right and the wrong, the true and the false, the righteous and the erroneous? Then wherefrom did they get the power to remain steady on the Right Way, avoiding scrupulously wrong ways, after getting the right sort of discernment? It was their Lord Who is the real source of everything, Who gave them the guidance and the power of doing good works on every critical occasion.

(3) Why did their Lord give them that guidance and power? He gave them these things because of their Faith.

(4) What is that characteristic of the Faith which produces the above results? The Faith which produces those results does not comprise mere profession but it is that Faith which becomes the moving spirit of one's conduct and character and has the power of reforming one's morals and deeds.

In order to illustrate this point, let us consider, in the physical life of man, the case of food that is consumed for nourishment, health, energy and happiness. It is obvious that these results cannot be produced by the mere taking in of any food, but by that "food" which is so digested as turns into blood and circulates into every vein to provide energy to every part of the body for its proper functioning. In the same way, in the moral life, guidance, righteous attitude and pure conduct and true success, depend on those right creeds that get deeply embedded in the mind, heart and soul. Otherwise, creeds which are merely professed by the tongue or lie dormant in some corner of the mind and the heart, cannot produce such results, for they cannot influence one's conduct, character, way of thinking and attitude towards life for the better. Just as one may eat food and still not obtain those useful results which are produced only if it is digested properly according to the physical laws of God, in the same

way, one who professes those right creeds merely with his tongue, but does not make them a part of his mind, heart and soul, does not deserve those rewards which are only for those whose deeds correspond to the creeds.

14. These facts about the life in Paradise have been stated in order to make conspicuous the high thinking and the noble qualities of the Believers. When they enter Paradise after coming out successful in this worldly test they will manifest the same high qualities of character that they had in this world. Instead of making urgent and immediate demands for beautiful articles of luxury, musical instruments, wine and women, they will sing hymns of praise to their Lord. This also belies that picture of the life in Paradise that some crooked people have formed of it. The fact is that the noble personalities which the Believers build in this world and the high ways of thinking and the excellent moral characters they form in this world and the great and rigid training they give to their feelings, emotions and desires, will become all the more prominent in the pure surroundings and environments of Paradise. That is why they will love it most to sing hymns of praise to Allah and glorify His name just as they did in this world. Besides this, their greatest wish and desire in Paradise will be peace for one another, as it was in their collective life in this world.

15. After the introductory verses (1-10), the Qurān takes up admonition which is the main subject of the Sūrah. In order to understand this fully we should keep two things in view as its background:—

First, a little before its revelation, the continuous horrible famine, which had afflicted Makkah for seven long years and humbled the haughty Quraish, had come to an end. Naturally this had given a blow to idol-worship and acted as a stimulus to God-worship: for in their utter helplessness, they had to supplicate to Allah and cry meekly for help. So much so that Abū Sufyān had to approach the Holy Prophet with this request: "Please pray to Allah to remove this affliction from us. But when the famine was over, and rains began to fall, and prosperity returned, they began to show rebellion and do evil deeds and started their hostile activities against the believers. Thus the hearts that had turned to Allah, again became neglectful of Him. (See XVI : 113, XXIII : 75-77, XLIV : 10-16).

Secondly, the Qurān answered the question with which they confronted the Holy Prophet whenever he warned them of the consequences of rejecting the Truth. They would say, "You are always threatening us with Allah's wrath; why doesn't the Divine torment visit us and why is it being delayed?"

Keeping the above background in view, VV. 11-12 may be expanded like this: "Allah does not hasten in punishing and seizing the people for their sins as He hastens in showing kindness and compassion to them. Do they, then, want Him to hasten His torment for their rebellions, as He hastened to remove famine in answer to their supplications? As this is not Our Way, We give them time to mend their evil ways in spite of their

transgressions and rebellions. We send warning after warning and give them respite until their term comes to an end. Then the law of requital comes into force. In contrast to this, their way is the way of mean and narrow-minded people. When affliction comes, they remember Allah, begin to cry and call Him meekly, but forget it all during the time of prosperity. Such bad ways as these are leading them to Divine torment."

16. The Arabic word قَرْنٌ (*qarn*) is commonly used for "the people living during the same period." But from the way the Qurān has used this word on different occasions, it is evident that by "qarn" is meant the community which had been invested with power and authority and appointed wholly or partially to the position of leadership of the world. One way in which such a community is destroyed is that it is totally exterminated but there are other forms of its destruction also.

17. Here the word ظُلْمٌ (*zulm*) has not been used in its commonly known limited sense, but it covers all sorts of sins that are committed, when people transgress the boundaries of Allah's slavery. (Please refer to E.N. 49 of AL-BAQARAH.)

18. VV. 13-14 have been pointedly addressed to the Arabs so as to say, "O Prophet of Arabia, learn a lesson from the communities that have passed before you. They were given an opportunity for doing good deeds in their time but instead of this they adopted the attitude of transgression and rebellion and rejected the teachings of the Messengers who had been sent for their guidance. As they failed in Our test, We dismissed them from leadership. Now, O people of Arabia, your turn has come and you have replaced them and have got the opportunity for doing the same work under the guidance of Our Prophet Muhammad. You must understand that you are undergoing the same test in which your predecessors have failed. If you do not want to meet with the end they met, you should make the right use of this opportunity by learning a lesson from their end and by avoiding the errors, which became the ultimate cause of their destruction."

19. They implied two things when they said these words. First, they meant that what Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was presenting as Divine Revelation was really the product of his own mind but he was ascribing it to Allah merely to make his claim weighty. Secondly, they implied this: "If you want to be the leader of your people, present something that may make them prosperous in the world and give up the doctrines of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter and the moral restrictions you are prescribing in your teaching. And if it be not possible, make some amendments in the Qurān so that a compromise may be effected between you and us on the principle of give and take so that there should be some scope for our *shirk* in your *Tauhīd* and for our self-worship and for our salvation in the Hereafter, irrespective of what we do in this world. You should also note it well that we cannot accept your absolute morality: therefore you should make an allowance for our prejudices, our rites and

customs, our personal and national interests and our lusts. We propose that with mutual agreement we should make a list of those religious demands which should be obligatory on us for the fulfilment of Allah's rights, and beyond that we should be free to conduct our worldly affairs in any way we like. This compromise is necessary because we cannot accept your demand that human life in all its aspects should entirely be led in accordance with the implications of the doctrines of *Tauḥīd* and the Hereafter and the regulations of the Islamic Code of life."

20. This is the answer to the two above-mentioned demands : "I have no authority of making any alterations in this Book for I am not its author but Allah is the One Who is sending it down to me. Therefore there is no question of any compromise about it. If you want to accept its Way, you will have to accept it as it is; otherwise you are free to reject it."

21. This is a very strong argument against their accusation that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was himself the author of the Qurān but was ascribing it to Allah, and in support of the Holy Prophet's claim that it was being sent down to him by Allah, Who was its Author. The argument is this : "You yourselves have witnessed the forty years of his life before his appointment to Prophethood. He was born in your own city and passed his boyhood, youth and middle-age before your very eyes. He lived among you and had all kinds of relations—social, marital, economic, etc. with you. So much so that no aspect of his life was hidden from you. Did you notice anything in his whole life that might show that he could be the author of this Book? Do you not use your common-sense?"

The question posed in the Qurān implied two things which were well known to everyone in Makkah about the Holy Prophet :—

First, during the forty years of his life before Prophethood, he had neither received any education nor training nor sat in any company that should have enabled him to become the author of such a Book as was full of unique things that were unknown to the people around him. No one had ever heard from him anything about the problems that had been dealt with in different sūrahs of the Qurān. So much so that not even a relative or close friend of his had ever noticed anything in his talk or in anything about him that might have shown any signs of gradual development towards it, before he made his great claim to Prophethood when he reached the age of forty. This was a clear proof of the fact that the Qurān was not the invention of his own brain and that it must have been sent down to him from outside. For it is impossible for a human being to produce anything like this, all of a sudden and without ever manifesting any signs of its evolution and development in his earlier life. That is why when some intelligent people of Makkah felt the absurdity of this accusation, they began to say that it was some other person who taught these things to him. But this was even more absurd than the first thing because they could not point out specifically a single person in the whole of Arabia,

not to say of Makkah, who had the ability of producing such unique things as were contained in the Qurān. They also knew that a person of his high calibre could not have remained obscure in some unknown corner for forty years.

The second thing, that had distinguished him during those forty years of his life, was his noble character both from the negative and from the positive aspects. He was never known to have told a single lie or practised any kind of deceit, forgery, cunning, craftiness and the like in any way whatsoever. On the other hand, all those people with whom he had come into contact in any capacity bore witness to the fact that he had been truthful, honest, and trust-worthy without any blemish whatsoever. As an instance, a most well-known historical fact may be cited. Only five years before his Prophethood, the Ka'abah was damaged by rains. When they were re-building it, a quarrel arose among the different clans of the Quraish as to who should have the honour of setting *Hajr-i-Aswad* (the Black Stone) in its proper place. Therefore it was agreed that the one who would be the first to enter into the *Haram* next morning should arbitrate in the quarrel. Next morning the first person who entered the *Haram* was Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). At this all the people cried out with joy, "He is an absolutely trust-worthy man, and we are fully satisfied with him; he is Muhammad." This is how Allah had made that large gathering of the Quraish bear witness to the fact that he was "The Trust-worthy", before appointing him as His Messenger. Therefore there was no justification for anyone to accuse the man who had never told a lie nor ever practised forgery nor craftiness in his whole life, of ascribing falsely to Allah his own literary creation, and claiming categorically and persistently that it was of Divine Origin.

That is why Allah has asked His Messenger to refute their absurd charge by saying, as it were, only this: "O my people, use your common-sense before making this absurd accusation, for I am not a stranger or a foreigner among you. I have lived a life-time of forty years among you before making a claim that I have received Revelation from Allah. How can you expect from my past that I would present the Qurān to you as Allah's Book, without gaining knowledge from Him and without His Command?" (For further details see *Sūrah AL-QAŞĀŞ*, E.N. 109).

22. That is, "If these Revelations are not from Allah and I myself compose them and present them as Revelations from Him, there can be no greater sinner than I. On the other hand, if these Revelations are truly from Allah and you are falsifying these, then there can be no greater sinner than you."

23. Some foolish people draw wrong and misleading conclusions from this verse, by a fallacious reasoning. They confine the meanings of *فلاح* (*falāh*) to "long life" or "worldly prosperity" or "worldly success" and argue like this: This verse declares categorically that "criminals can never attain success." The converse of this proposition, that is, "anyone who is successful cannot be a criminal" must also be true. Hence, if a

claimant should live a long life after his claim to Prophethood or prosper in the world or his claim receives a good response in the world from the people, he should be acknowledged as a true prophet. For they argue, if he had been a false prophet he could not have "prospered," but would have been killed or starved to death or rendered unsuccessful in his mission, as soon as he had claimed to be a prophet. But even a little thinking will show that this "argument" is fallacious on the face of it. Firstly, the converse of every proposition is not always true. Secondly, the Qurān does not use the word *falāh* in this limited sense. Thirdly, Allah deals with the criminals according to His Divine Law of respite.

Now let us consider the matter in detail. The words "Indeed the criminals cannot attain success", have not been used, in the context they occur, to prescribe a criterion for judging a true Prophet from a false one, so that if a claimant is "successful", he should be accepted, and if he is not, he should be rejected. As a matter of fact, these words have been put in the mouth of the Messenger to make a declaration like this: "I know it for certain that the criminals cannot attain (true) success: therefore I cannot commit the crime of making a false claim to Prophethood. But as regards you, I am absolutely sure that you cannot attain true success because you are guilty of falsifying me who am a true Prophet of Allah."

The other thing is that the word *falāh* is not used in the limited sense of "worldly success", but it has been used to denote the permanent 'success' which never suffers any loss whatsoever irrespective of the fact whether the claimant gains or does not gain any worldly success in the initial stage. Nay, it is just possible that a false "claimant" who invites people to misguidance should attain great worldly "success" and his misguidance might also prosper. This is, however, not success in the terminology of the Qurān, but this would be an utter failure. On the other hand, it is also possible that the inviter to the Truth should suffer untold afflictions or fall a prey to the persecutions of the transgressors, and leave this world without winning over anyone to the side of the Truth, but this will be, in the terminology of the Qurān, true success and not a failure.

The other thing that refutes the fallacy of these foolish people is that they do not take into consideration the "Divine Law of Respite", according to which the mere fact that a false prophet enjoyed a long "prosperous" life is not a proof that he was a true prophet. The Qurān has made it clear at many places that Allah does not expedite the matter of the punishment of the criminals, but gives them respite to mend their ways; nay, He also lets them loose in their deviation if they abuse that respite and become more corrupt. Sometimes He makes them even more "prosperous" so that they should fully manifest all the evils they had hidden in their hearts and incur full punishment which they really deserve for their evil deeds. The "Divine Law of Respite" takes its due course in the case of

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مَسْتَهُمْ إِذَا لَهُمْ مَكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا ۗ إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا
 يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
 كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ ۖ وَجَرَّتِ بِهَمْ بَرِيحٌ طَيِّبَةٌ ۖ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ
 عَاصِفٌ ۖ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ ۖ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ ۖ
 دَعَا اللَّهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۗ لَئِن أَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
 الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَلَمَّا أَنْجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ يَا أَيُّهَا
 النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغَيْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ لَمَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ
 فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ
 مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ ۗ
 حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِرُوا ۖ
 عَلَيْهَا آسِهًا أَمْرًا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ ۗ
 كَذَلِكَ نَقِصُّ الْأَيَّاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ دَارِ السَّلَامِ ۗ وَ
 يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ ۗ
 وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا
 خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ بِمِثْلِهَا ۗ وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۗ
 مَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۗ كَانِمًا ۗ أُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ قِطْعًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ
 مُظْلِمًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ
 جَمِيعًا ۗ ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاءُكُمْ ۖ فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ
 وَقَالَ شُرَكَاءُهُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَ

This is how people behave: No sooner do We show mercy to them after some calamity had afflicted them than they begin to practise deceptions²⁹ concerning Our Signs. Say to them, "Allah is more swift in His plans than you: indeed His angels are keeping a full record of your acts of deception."³⁰ It is Allah Who enables you to travel over land and by sea. So you set sails in ships, rejoicing over a fair breeze. Then all of a sudden a strong wind begins to rage against the passengers and billows begin to surge upon them from every side and they realize that they have been encircled by the tempest. At that time they pray to Allah with sincere faith, saying, "If Thou deliverest us from this peril, we will become Thy grateful servants."³¹ But when He delivers them, the same people begin to rebel in the land against the Truth. O people, this rebellion of yours is harmful only to yourselves. (You may enjoy) the transitory pleasures of this world, then you have to return to Us: then We will let you know what you have been doing. This worldly life (which has so enamoured you that you have become neglectful of Our Signs) may be likened to the produce of the earth: We sent rain-water from the sky, and the crops of which man and animals eat, grew up luxuriantly. Then at that very time, when the land was at its best, and the crops had ripened and decked out and the owners were presuming that they would be able to benefit from them, Our Command came all of a sudden by night or by day, and We destroyed it so thoroughly as though nothing had existed there the previous day.^{31a} Thus We expound Our Signs in detail for the consideration of those people who are thoughtful. (You are being deluded by this transitory life,) and Allah invites you to the Abode of Peace.³² (Guidance is in His power,) and He guides to the Right Way whomsoever He pleases. Those who have done excellent works will get excellent rewards, and even more than their merits:³³ neither gloom nor disgrace shall cover their faces. They deserve the Garden, where they will abide for ever. And those who have earned evil deeds shall have their recompense according to the evil they earned:³⁴ disgrace shall set over them: there shall be none to protect them from Allah: their faces shall be covered with such gloom³⁵ as if

the black veils of the night had fallen over them: they deserve Hell, wherein they shall abide for ever. On the Day We will muster them together (in Our Court,) We will say to those who committed *shirk*, "Stay where you are, you and those whom you set as partners with Us." Then We will remove the state of strangeness from among them,³⁶ and the partners they had set up will say, "You did not worship us."

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false prophets as it does in the case of other criminals. And there is no reason why they should be an exception to this. Satan, the greatest of all criminals, has been allowed to practise every kind of deception up to the Day of Judgement, and there is no mention of any exception to this effect that he will not be allowed to set up a false prophet.

As a last resort, such perverse interpreters of the Qurān turn to VV. 44-47 of Sūrah AL-ḤĀQQAH: "If Muhammad had fabricated something himself and ascribed that to Us, We would have seized his hand and cut off his heart's vein." But these cannot serve their purpose, for what they imply is only this: "If the true Prophet appointed by Allah were to ascribe any false thing to Allah, he would be seized forthwith". Therefore it is no more than a fallacy to argue from this to the erroneous conclusion that the impostor who is not seized is a true prophet, for this Divine Principle applies only to a true Prophet and not to an impostor. In order to grasp this point, let us take the instance of the government servants. It is obvious that the rules and regulations which are prescribed for government servants apply only to those who are actually government servants and not to impostors. Those who pretend to be government servants are dealt with according to the criminal code like other criminals and villains and not according to the code of employment. Besides this, the context in which these verses occur clearly shows that these are not laying down any criterion of judging whether a claimant is a true Prophet or an impostor. For, in continuation of the preceding verse (43), the passage will, so to say, read like this: "This is the Revelation sent down from the Lord of the universe. If Muhammad had himself fabricated this and ascribed that to Us, We would have....." Moreover, a true Prophet can easily be distinguished from an impostor by his high character, his noble mission and the unique Message he presents. Hence there was no need of setting up such an irrational and unnatural standard of distinguishing a true Prophet from an impostor.

24. This is a fine way of saying that no such intercessors exist as can plead their cases with Allah. For if "something" is not in the knowledge of Allah, it implies that it does not exist at all, for everything that exists anywhere in the heavens and the earth is in His knowledge.

25. Please see E.N. 230 of AL-BAQARAH and E.N. 24 of AL-AN'ĀM.

26. The "decree" that Allah has ordained is that "the Reality" shall be kept hidden from man's senses in order to test whether he recognizes this by using his common-sense, intelligence, conscience and intuition, and if he does not, he shall be allowed to tread the wrong ways he chooses. That is why their differences about the Reality are not being resolved by uncovering it today.

This thing has been stated here to remove a common misunderstanding about the diversity of religions in the world.

At that time, there was a confusion in the minds of the people (and is even today) concerning this. They said, "Different people profess different religions, and the followers of each religion claim that their religion alone is the true one. How may then a seeker after truth judge which one of these is the true religion?" The answer is: "In the beginning all mankind had one religion only, and that was the true religion. Then people strayed away from it and invented different religions of their own with different creeds and ways. Now if you desire that Allah Himself should uncover the Truth and present it to you to enable you to decide which religion is the true one, you should know that this will not be done in this life, because you are required to decide this by using your common-sense and intelligence. This worldly life is a trial to see whether or not you yourselves recognize the Truth by using your common-sense and intelligence."

27. That is, "Though they demanded a sign as a proof of the fact that he was a true Prophet and was presenting true Revelations, this was not based on a genuine desire for recognizing and accepting the Truth but was merely a pretext for rejecting it. For they had no intention of moulding their habits, their morality, their social system, in short, reforming every aspect of their life in accordance with the implications of the acceptance of the Message of the Prophet. As they did not intend to believe in it, they would say, even after seeing a Sign, that no Sign had been shown to them. Obviously, they would not give up that "freedom" which they were enjoying in following their desires and lusts, by accepting the Unseen (the creeds of *Tauh'id* and the Hereafter), which would bind them to the absolute moral principles."

28. That is, "I have presented before you what Allah has sent down to me; but what He has not sent down to me, is "unseen" both for me and for you, and it is entirely with Allah to reveal or not to reveal it. Now if you will not believe unless Allah sends down what He has not sent down, you may wait for it: I, too, shall wait and see whether your persistent demand is or is not satisfied".

29. They practised deceptions regarding "the Sign of the famine" that had been inflicted on them (VV. 11, 12). This verse alludes to the same, as if to say, "How dare you demand a Sign again, whereas recently the Sign of the famine has been shown to you? At that time you invoked the help of your deities but in vain, though you had set them up as inter-

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بَيْنَكُمْ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ كَغَافِلِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوا كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مِمَّا
 أَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمْ الْحَقُّ وَصَلَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾
 قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَ
 مَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدِيرُ
 الْأَمْرَ ۗ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ ۗ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ فَذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ الْحَقُّ ۗ
 فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ ۗ فَأَنْتَ تُصِرُّونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ كَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَاتُ
 رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ
 مَنْ يَبْدُوا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۗ قُلْ اللَّهُ يَبْدُوا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ فَأَنْتَ
 تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ قُلْ اللَّهُ يَهْدِي
 لِلْحَقِّ ۗ أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ
 يُهْدَى ۗ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا ۗ إِنَّ الظَّنَّ
 لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا
 الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَى مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَ
 تَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ قُلْ
 فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعَلَمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ
 كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ
 مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۗ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾
 وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي عَبْدٌ لِي عَزَبِي ۗ لَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۗ أَنْتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَ

Allah suffices as a witness between you and us, and 29-33
(even if you worshipped us,) we were utterly unaware of your
worship.”³⁷ At that time everyone will taste of what he did.
All shall be brought back to Allah, their real Lord, and all
the lies they had invented would vanish from them.

Ask them, “Who provides for you from the heavens and
the earth? Who has power over the faculties of hearing and
sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead
from the living? Who directs the system of the universe?”
They will surely reply, “Allah”. Say, “Will you not, then,
refrain from (going against the Truth)?” The same Allah is
your true Lord: ³⁸ then, what remains there after the Truth
except deviation? Well, whither are you being turned
away?”³⁹ O Prophet, behold! thus has the Word of your
Lord come true in regard to the evil-doers that they would
not believe.⁴⁰

Ask them, “Is there any of the partners you have set up 34
with Allah, who originates creation and then brings it back
again?”⁴¹—Say, “It is Allah Who originates creation and
brings it back again. How then are you being perverted to
the wrong ways of *shirk*?”⁴²

Ask them, “Is there any of the partners you have set up 35
with Allah, who guides to the Truth?”⁴³— Say, “It is Allah
alone Who guides to the Truth.” Very well, then tell :
“Who is more worthy to be followed : He Who guides to the
Truth or the one who cannot guide unless he himself be
guided? What has then gone wrong with you that you make
perverted judgements?”

The fact is that most of them are following mere 36
conjecture,⁴⁴ whereas conjecture cannot in any way fulfil the
requirements of the true knowledge. Allah has full knowledge
of what they are doing.

And this Qurān is not a thing that could be composed 37
without Allah’s Revelation : nay, it is the confirmation of
what was revealed before it, and full explanation of ‘the
Book’.⁴⁵ There is no doubt about this that it is from the
Lord of the universe.

Do they say that the Prophet has composed it himself? 38-41
Tell them, “If what you say be true, then produce one sūrah

like this, and you may call to your assistance anyone you can other than Allah.”⁴⁶ The fact is that they have denied (on mere conjecture) what was not within the reach of their knowledge nor had they, as yet, tasted its consequences.⁴⁷ Likewise, the people who went before them declared as false the Revelations, but behold, what was the end of those unjust people! Some of these people will believe in it and others will not, and your Lord knows these mischief-makers⁴⁸ very well indeed. If these people declare that you are an impostor, say to them, “I am responsible for my deeds and you are for yours : you are not accountable for what I do, and I am not for what you do.”⁴⁹

Contd. from p. 25]

cessors with Allah and believed that offerings to their shrines would prove very effective in removing the famine. But you yourselves learnt by first hand experience that those so-called gods possessed no power at all. Therefore when you were convinced that all power belongs to Allah alone, you turned to Him and began to invoke His help. This experience ought to have convinced you of the Truth of the Message of Muhammad (Allah’s peace be upon him) for this was the very fundamental thing which he was teaching. Instead of learning a lesson from this Sign, you began to practise deceptions to explain it away, as soon as the famine was over and there had come the blessed rain-fall. You invented many explanations (deceptions) concerning the causes of the famine and its subsequent end in order to ‘escape’ from the doctrine of *Tauhid* and stick to your *shirk*. The verse is meant to declare that no Sign would convince such people as those who had not benefited from the great Sign of the famine. Therefore there was no use of showing any sign to them.

30. “Allah is more swift in His plans than you. . . .” means this : “If you practise deceptions in order to explain away the Sign of the famine so that you might find excuses to evade the implications of its acceptance, in order to continue your rebellious attitudes, Allah is more swift in carrying out His plans to out-do your deceptive methods. He will leave you free to move in your wrong ways : He will even bestow upon you the worldly prosperity, which will so delude you that you will forget that you were being closely watched and will, therefore, commit evil deeds with apparent immunity and enjoy yourselves to your hearts’ content. But His angels will go on keeping a full and complete record of your deeds, which will be presented for your prosecution after your death.”

31. The fact that even the most obdurate *mushriks* and the most hardened atheists who forget Allah when things go well with them, begin to invoke Allah’s help when they are pressed hard from all sides and despair of help from any other quarter, is a clear evidence that there is the

All-Powerful Allah Who is controlling each and every thing in the universe. (Please refer to E.N. 29, AL-AN'ĀM.)

31a. The parable is meant to warn those who are utterly neglectful of the Life-after-death because of their apparent "success" in this worldly life. They have been likened to the owners of the land who were happy to presume that the crop was ripe and luxuriant and it was within their power to reap it and enjoy the produce of their harvest. They were so sure of this that they began to enjoy the fore-taste of the ripened crops, unaware of the Decree of Allah which destroyed their crops and all their great expectations also. Like-wise those who neglect to make preparations for the Life-after-death will find to their sorrow that all they did to earn for the enjoyments of this world was, in relation to the Next World, like the ripe crop that was destroyed all of a sudden.

32. That is, "Allah invites to the Way that leads to the Abode of Peace in the Hereafter."

"The Abode of Peace" here means Paradise, where there will be no fear whatsoever of any loss, calamity, sorrow, pain and trouble.

33. That is, "Allah by His grace will give to those who did good deeds more than their due reward."

34. That is, "In contrast to the additional rewards to the good people, those who earned evil deeds, shall be punished only in proportion to their crimes." (For further explanation see E.N. 109a of XXVII).

35. It shall be that kind of gloom that overspreads the faces of the criminals when they are caught, and they despair all hope of escape.

36. Some commentators are of the opinion that the original words of the Text (فَرَزْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ) mean this: "We will cut off every kind of connection and relation between them so that they are not able to show any concern for one another." But these meanings are opposed to the Arabic usage, according to which they mean: "We will distinguish them from one another" or "We will cause a distinction among them." That is why these have been translated into English like this: "We will remove the state of strangeness from among them." That is, the *mushriks* and their deities shall stand in front of each other and recognize their mutual and respective positions. The *mushriks* shall come to know the whole truth about those whom they worshipped and their deities will learn everything about their worshippers.

37. That is, "Their deities—the angels, the jinns, the spirits, the fore-fathers, the prophets, the saints, the martyrs and all others—whom they had set up as partners with God and rendered those rights to them which belonged to God alone, will dissociate themselves from their worshippers and declare, "We did not know at all that you worshipped us, for no reverence, no respect, no honour, no admiration, no regard, no adoration, no homage, that you paid to us; no prayer, no supplication, no request, no offering, no gift, you presented to us; and no praise, no prostration, no bowing down, no remembrance, no religious service, or

ceremony or ritual you made in our name ever reached us.”

38. That is, “As you yourselves admit that Allah alone is your real Providence, Owner and Master, He alone is your true Lord, and, therefore, entitled to your servitude and worship. How have you, then, made others as partners with Him?”

39. It should be kept in mind that these questions have been posed to the common people : therefore they are not being asked, “Whither are you turning away?” but “Whither are you being turned away?” The passive voice clearly shows that there must be some person (or persons) who was turning away the people from the right direction to the wrong one. That is why this appeal is being made to the people : “Why are you blindly following those who are misguiding you? Why don’t you use your own common-sense? When you yourselves admit the Truth about Allah, why don’t you consider the fact that you are being turned away from Him?”

This question has been posed at many places in the Qurān to bring home the Truth to the common people, but at every place the passive voice has been employed in order to keep back the names of the misguiding ones so that their followers should consider the matter coolly and objectively. This also contains a valuable piece of advice for those engaged in propagation work. By avoiding the names of the misguiding ones, the Qurān has taken away a very strong weapon from the hands of those, who could otherwise incite the followers that their revered leaders were being made the target of ridicule and criticism.

40. That is, “This Word of your Lord has come true that those who have made up their minds that they would not believe in any case would never believe because of their q̄bduracy, even if the Truth were to be presented before them with very plain and clear arguments.”

41. It is to be noted that the answers to the questions posed in this and the following verse have been put in the mouth of the Holy Prophet in contrast to the answers posed in the preceding verses. This is because the *mushriks* themselves believed, and therefore could not deny, that Allah originated the creation and that their gods had no share in this. But they would not admit that He could or would bring it back, for they could not in that case reject the doctrine of the Life-after-death, though it was obvious that the One Who originated the creation could also bring it back again and not any one of those who had not originated it. That is why the answer has been put in the mouth of the Holy Prophet that he should declare it openly and boldly that Allah originated the creation and could and would bring it back again.

42. This question has been posed to bring home to them the folly of the doctrine of *shirk*. The argument is this: “When Allah originates the creation and has the power to bring it back again, where do the gods you have set up come in? If you think a little, you yourselves will realize that there is no room for any one in the universe for any claim or title to

your reverence or worship or servitude.”

43. This is one of the series of questions that have been posed to refute the doctrine of *shirk* and to establish the doctrine of *Tauhīd*. Besides, it is also meant to focus attention on the importance of the guidance to the Truth, which is one of the greatest human necessities. For it is obvious that the human needs and requirements are not confined to food, clothes and the like necessities of the physical life nor to its protection from losses, distresses, calamities etc. But one of man's needs (nay, his greatest need) is to have the knowledge of the right way of life so that he may, on the whole, achieve success in it. It is obvious that in order to be successful in life, man should have the correct knowledge of the use he should make of and the way he should employ his own physical, mental and spiritual powers and capabilities and natural resources. He should also know the nature and the kind of behaviour he should adopt towards other human beings (and as a whole, towards the system of the universe in which he has inevitably to live and work), with whom he comes into contact in different capacities. The Qurān calls that right way “The Truth” and the guidance that leads to that way “The Guidance to the Truth”.

Now let us turn to the question that has been posed in this verse. The Qurān asks the *mushriks* and all those people who reject the teachings of the Holy Prophet : Is there any of the partners and gods you have set up besides Allah, who guides you to the Truth or can do so? Obviously the answer to this will surely be in the negative for neither of the classes of gods is capable of this : First, let us consider this with regard to those gods and goddesses and living or dead human beings, who are worshipped as gods. Though it is true that people turn to them for the fulfilment of their needs or for their protection from calamities in some supernatural way, yet they never turn to them to seek guidance to the Truth nor have they themselves ever sent it nor do their devotees ever claim that their deities teach them the principles of morality, sociology, culture, economics, politics, law, justice and the like.

Then there is the case of those who make rules, regulations and laws which others accept and follow. It is true that such persons are accepted and followed as leaders, but the pertinent question is this : Are they the real guides to the Truth, or are they capable of becoming guides to it? Does any one of them possess the kind of knowledge that comprehends all those truths that are a pre-requisite for formulating right principles for the guidance of human life? Can anyone of them have full vision of the vast field of activities over which the human problems spread? Is there anyone of them who is absolutely free from the weaknesses, prejudices, personal or communal interests, which become hindrances to the formulation of just laws? If the answers to these questions are in the negative (and obviously no one in his senses can answer otherwise), how can then people with such limitations be expected to be the source of guidance to the Truth?

[Contd on p. 34

أَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ
 الضُّعْفَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا إِلَّا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي
 الْعُصَىٰ وَلَوْ كَانُوا إِلَّا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَٰكِنَّ
 النَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً
 مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ وَمَا
 كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّمَا نُرِيكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيْكَ
 فَإِنَّا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِكْلِ أُمَّةٍ
 رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَ
 يَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي
 ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا
 يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن آتَاكُمْ عَذَابُهُ
 بَيَاتًا أَوْ نَهَارًا مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ أَتُمْ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ أَمْنُكُمْ
 بِهِ أَتُّنَّ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا
 عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ
 أَحَقُّ هُوَ قُلْ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مَّا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ
 لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ وَأَسْرُوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا
 رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ إِلَّا إِنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ
 مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا إِنْ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ

١٣٠٥
 عليه السلام
 وقف النبي

There are many among them who hear what you say : 42-46
 but will you make the deaf listen to you even though they be
 incapable of understanding it?⁵⁰ Then there are many others
 among them who see you : but will you show the way to the
 blind, even though they be bereft of sight?⁵¹ The fact is that
 Allah does not in any way wrong the people, but they wrong
 themselves.⁵² (Today these people are intoxicated with the
 life of this world but) on the Day when Allah will muster
 them, they will feel as if they had stayed (in this world) for
 only an hour⁵³ or so in order to have acquaintance with one
 another. (At that time they will realize that) they who dis-
 believed in their meeting with Allah were losers⁵⁴ indeed and
 were not rightly guided. Maybe, We let you witness some
 of the dire consequences with which We threaten them or
 raise you to Ourselves before this. Anyway they shall have
 to return to Us and Allah is a witness to what they are doing.

There is a Messenger for every *ummat*:⁵⁵ then, when its 47
 Messenger comes a just judgement is passed on its people, and
 they are not wronged in the least.⁵⁶

They ask, "When will this threat come to pass? Tell us 48-52
 if what you say be true." Say, "I have no power to bring
 benefits or to avert evils from myself: everything depends upon
 Allah's will.⁵⁷ Every *ummat* has its appointed term : when that
 term expires it is neither delayed nor advanced for them by a
 single hour."⁵⁸ Ask them, "Have you ever considered this?
 (What can you do to avert it,) if His scourge comes upon you
 suddenly by night or by day? Why is it that the criminals
 are seeking to hasten it?" What! will you believe in it, when
 it actually overtakes you?—Do you want to escape from it
 now, when you yourselves were demanding it? Then it will
 be said to the transgressors, "Now taste the everlasting torment;
 what other recompense than this do you expect to get for
 what you have been earning?"

Then they ask, "Is what you say really true?" Tell 53-56
 them, "Yes, by my Lord, it is absolutely true, and you have
 no power to avert it." And every person who has transgressed
 would gladly give all the wealth of the earth as ransom, if he
 possessed it, to redeem himself from the torment. When they
 will see the torment, they will be remorseful in their hearts.⁵⁹

And the judgement will be passed on them with justice and no wrong will be done to them. Listen! all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. Note it well that Allah's word is true, yet most of them know it not. It is He Who ordained life and death, and to Him you shall all return.

Contd. from p. 31]

In the light of the above questions, we are able to grasp the significance of the question that has been posed in the Qurān : "Is there any of the partners you have set up with Allah who can guide you to the Truth?"

This shows conclusively that Allah alone has the power to satisfy all the human needs and requirements, which may be divided into two categories. First, man stands in need of a providence, a protector, a being to hear and grant his prayers, in short, a permanent support to which he may turn whenever other supports should fail him. The above question inevitably leads to the conclusion that there is no god other than Allah who can fulfil these needs. The other human needs and requirements demand that there should be a guide to lay down such principles for the conduct of human life in its entirety as should be obeyed with perfect confidence and peace of mind. The question posed in V. 35 implies that that "Being" can be none other than Allah. Therefore there remains no argument in support of the point that the principles of culture, morality, and politics should be based on *shirk* or secularism except that one should persist in obduracy and obstinacy.

44. It means that neither the authors of religion, nor philosophers, nor law-makers based their opinions on knowledge but on mere guesswork and conjecture. Likewise, those who followed these religious or worldly leaders did it on the mere assumption that their authors were great people; therefore they must be right. That was why their forefathers and the common people followed them.

45. The arguments contained in V. 37 may be elaborated like this:

(1) The Qurān confirms that which had been revealed before it and presents the same fundamental principles and teachings which were taught by the Prophets who came before Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). Had he invented the Qurān, he would have made additions to the truths of the former books in order to make himself conspicuous.

(2) The Qurān explains in detail and amplifies the fundamental principles and teachings contained in "the Book", that is, the Scriptures brought by the former Prophets, and adds more evidence and explanations to it so that it may be better understood and practised.

46. There is a general misunderstanding that the challenge of the Qurān to produce (a book, nay,) a sūrah like this, is in regard to its eloquent, pure and unique literary excellence. This has been the natural result of the way in which discussions have been carried on to prove the miracle

of the Qurān. But the Qurān is far above this that it should claim to be a unique and matchless book because of its excellent diction. There is no doubt at all that it is unique and matchless in this respect also, but the real basis of its claim and challenge, that no human brain is capable of producing a book like this, is its subject-matter and teachings. The Qurān itself has stated at different places those aspects which are a sure proof of its revelation from Allah and the refutation of the false aspersions that it was a human invention. This has already been explained at appropriate places and will be explained in the succeeding pages. (For further explanation see E.N. 26, 27 of LII).

47. They could declare the Qurān as forged on two grounds only but neither of these existed : First, if they had had a proof that the Book had not been revealed by Allah, but had been forged by someone; secondly, that the Truths enunciated in it and the information given in it were false. But no one could say on the basis of true knowledge that the Book had been really forged and then ascribed to God : nor could anyone say that he had peeped behind the curtains of the "unseen" and discovered that there was not One God (as taught in this Book) but many gods in the heavens : nor could anyone assert on the basis of true knowledge that there were no angels, no Revelations and no God, but these were mere fictions that had been invented by some fertile imagination : nor had anyone witnessed by actually visiting the "Hereafter" that the information about rewards and punishments was utterly wrong. But in spite of the lack of any proof to the contrary, they were challenging the genuineness of the Qurān with the boldness and impudence of one who had made a thorough research into the matter and proved it to the hilt.

48. Those who do not believe in the Qurān have been called "mischief-makers" because their rejection is not based on any sound reason but on prejudice and selfishness and because it prevents others from believing in it.—"And your Lord knows them very well" because there is nothing that is hidden from Him. They can deceive the people that they are rejecting the Qurān because they are convinced that it is not the Book of God, but they cannot deceive Allah that they are doing this with good intentions for he knows that it is because of their mischief. They are obdurate and obstinate and are suppressing the voice of their consciences and hearts : they deliberately shut their ears and minds against the Truth and prefer their worldly interests, their fancies, their lusts and desires to it. That is why they cannot be regarded as "innocent" sinners, but they are, in fact, the "mischief-makers."

49. This is to say, "I don't want to enter into useless discussions and disputes with you on this score. If I am an impostor, I alone shall bear the consequences for it; and if you are rejecting the truth, you are not doing any harm to me but to yourselves alone."

50. Though this and the succeeding verse have been addressed to the Holy Prophet, these are meant to reprove those people who were

not paying attention to the Message. For they only heard the sounds of the words he spoke to them, just as the animals hear the sound of the words, but pay no attention to understand what is said to them. This was because they were prejudiced against him and had decided before-hand that they would not acknowledge anything, however, reasonable that may be, if it went against the creeds and ways they had inherited, and against their own desires, lusts, and interests. Likewise those people who live like animals hear the sounds of his words, but pay no attention to their meaning for they are not interested in anything other than "eating, drinking and making merry." They are so engaged in and intoxicated with the gratification of their lusts that they never bother to find out whether what they are doing is right or wrong. All such people are deaf to the Message, though they might have ears for other things.

51. Here again they may be likened to animals which see with their eyes but cannot perceive anything beyond what appears on the surface. Likewise those people saw the Holy Prophet and his Companions, but did not perceive their pure life for they had not got the mind's eyes to see the wonderful change that was coming in the lives of those who had listened to and accepted the Message.

As has been pointed out in E.N. 50, though these verses were addressed to the Holy Prophet, they were really meant to reprove and admonish the disbelievers in a subtle manner so as to arouse their dormant faculties of hearing and seeing and open these for the reception and acceptance of the rational and sympathetic Message. In order to understand the wisdom of this indirect method of admonition, let us take the example of two righteous friends. One of them who lived among corrupt people did his very best to convey the righteous message both by precept and by practice. He set the model of the highest moral conduct and character before them, and urged them in a sincere and sympathetic manner to consider their own moral condition, and admonished them in a very sincere and rational manner to make them realize that they were living in a very corrupt moral state, and advised them to adopt the right way of life. But none of them would pay any attention to his admonition nor learn any lesson from his pure life. Suppose his friend came there at that time and said: "Why are you giving advice to these deaf people and showing the way to these blind ones, who have no ears for good things and no eyes for the right way?" It is obvious that these words would not have been uttered by way of dissuading the first friend from doing his reform work but for arousing the dormant faculties of the corrupt people by this subtle indirect method.

52. "Allah does not in any way wrong the people" because He gives them ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to feel and ponder, and everything that is required to enable them to discriminate between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. But it is "they who wrong themselves" by refusing to make the right and proper use of their faculties and by

following their lusts and enjoying the things of this world. Naturally this has made their eyes so blind and their ears so deaf and their hearts so dead that they are incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong, good and bad, for their conscience has also become dead.

53. That is, "When they will enter the Hereafter and contrast its eternal life with the transitory life they lived in this world, they will realize that their past life was nothing in comparison with the eternal future life of the Hereafter. Then they will see clearly that it was a big folly to spoil the eternal life for the sake of transitory joys and paltry gains of the world."

54. They were losers because they forgot that one Day they would have to present themselves before Allah and as a result of this disbelief committed evil deeds.

55. Here the word *أمة* (*ummat*) does not merely mean a nation or a community but includes all those people whom the Message of a Messenger reaches after his appointment, even though he be not alive among them. More than this : as long as his teachings remain intact and within the reach of everyone to ascertain what they really are, all such people will be treated and judged as his *ummat* and their cares decided with justice in accordance with V. 47. According to this standard, all the people of the world are the *ummat* of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and will remain so, as long as the Qurān continues to be published in its original and complete form as today. That is why it has not been said, "There is a Messenger in every *ummat*" but "There is a Messenger for every *ummat*."

56. That is, when the Message of a Messenger reaches a people, they should know that henceforth they are on trial and that no excuse would be accepted that they were ignorant of it. Then judgement is passed on them with scrupulous justice. Those, who accept the Message and mend their way in accordance with it, are declared to be worthy of Allah's blessings, and those who reject it are doomed to a torment that may be inflicted both in this world and in the next World or only in the Hereafter.

57. This is to say, "I never said that I will sit in judgement on you and inflict torment on those who do not believe in me. Therefore, I am not in a position to tell when the threat will be made good. As the threat has been held out by Allah, He will pass His judgement on you when He wills, and in whatever way He wills, for everything depends on His will."

58. That is, "Allah passes His judgement on individuals and communities after the expiry of the term that He Himself has set and He alone knows how long it lasts for a community. He is not hasty in giving rewards or punishments. When He sends His Messenger to deliver His Message, He allows sufficient time to each individual and to each community to consider it and ponder over it and mend his (or its) way, during the appointed term. The period of the term may extend to centuries in the case of a community and He knows best how long it should be.

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جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ۗ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ
 لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا ۗ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا
 يَجْمَعُونَ ۝ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِّن رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُم مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا
 وَحَلَالًا ۗ قُلْ اللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ ۗ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ ۝ وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ
 يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ
 وَلَٰكِن أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ۝ وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُوا مِنْهُ مِنْ
 قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ۗ وَ
 مَا يَعْزُبُ عَن رَّبِّكَ مِن مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا
 أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ۝ إِلَّا إِن أَوْلِيَاءُ اللَّهِ لَا
 خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ۝
 لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ
 هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۝ وَلَا يَحْزَنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ۗ هُوَ
 السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝ إِلَّا إِن لِلَّهِ مِن فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا
 يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۗ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَ
 إِن هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَ
 النَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۗ إِن فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ۝ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ
 وَكْدًا سُبْحَنَهُ ۗ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ۗ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِن عِنْدَكُمْ
 مِّن سُلْطٰنٍ بِهٰذَا ۗ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ قُلْ إِن الَّذِينَ
 يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ۝ مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا

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ع
١١

وقف لازم

O mankind, there has come to you the Admonition from 57-60
 your Lord : this is the remedy for the diseases of the heart,
 and guidance and blessing for those who believe in it. O
 Prophet, say, "It is the bounty of Allah and His mercy that
 He has sent this thing : let the people rejoice over it for it is
 better than what they amass." O Prophet, ask them, "Have
 you ever considered that you yourselves have made something
 unlawful and the other lawful out of what⁶⁰ Allah has given
 you?"⁶¹ Then ask them, "Has Allah allowed you this or do
 you ascribe a false thing to Him?"⁶² What treatment do
 they think Allah will mete out to them who ascribe this false
 thing to Him on the Day of Resurrection? Indeed Allah is
 bountiful to mankind, but most of them are not grateful.⁶³

O Prophet, We are witnessing whatever work you may 61-65
 be engaged in and whatever portion you may be reciting from
 the Qurān; We are also keeping a watch, O people, over
 whatever you are doing : for there is not an iota of anything,
 small or big, in the earth and the heavens that is hidden from
 your Lord, and everything is on record in the clear Register.⁶⁴
 Listen : those, who are Allah's friends and who believe and
 fear God, shall have no occasion for fear or sorrow : there is
 nothing but good news for them in this world and in the
 Hereafter : Allah's words cannot be changed—this is the
 greatest success. O Prophet, let not their remarks grieve you,
 for honour wholly rests with Allah. He is the All-Hearing,
 the All-Knowing.

Note it well that all the dwellers of the heavens and of 66-67
 the earth belong to Allah : and those who invoke, besides
 Allah, partners (they have set up with Him) follow nothing
 but surmises and merely indulge in guess-works. It is He Who
 ordained the night for you to repose in it, and gave to the day
 its light. Indeed there are Signs in this for those who listen⁶⁵
 (to the Message).

They remarked, "Allah has taken a son to Himself."⁶⁶ 68-70
 Allah is All-Pure!⁶⁷ He is Self-Sufficient : He is the Owner of
 everything that is in the heavens and the earth.⁶⁸ Have you
 any authority for what you say? What! do you ascribe to
 Allah that of which you have no knowledge? O Prophet,
 say to them, "Those, who ascribe false things to Allah, can

never prosper.” Well, they may enjoy the transitory pleasures of this life, but after this they have to return to Us and then We will make them taste a severe torment because of this blasphemy they are committing.

Contd. from p. 37]

When that term, which is based on justice, expires, and that person or community does not repent of its rebellious conduct, then Allah passes His judgement. When the time of the judgement comes it is neither advanced nor delayed even by a single hour.”

59. “They will be remorseful,” when all of a sudden, they face the torment on the Day, which they had denied throughout their lives, and on that presumption had gone on doing wrong deeds. Not only this : they will also feel very sorry that they had denied the Messengers and brought baseless charges against them, who had warned them of it. Therefore when they witness it against all their expectations, they will find the ground slipping from under their feet and will feel utterly helpless and guilty in their minds because of the remembrance of their wrong doings and of the pricking of their consciences. In short, their condition will be that of a gambler, who turns a deaf ear to the counsel of his well-wishers and stakes his all on mere speculation and goes bankrupt. But such a person has to blame none but himself only for his sad plight.

60. It has been purposely avoided to translate the Arabic word رِزْق (rizq) into “provisions” for it is liable to create a very serious misunderstanding regarding the implications of this verse. For in this sense rizq will be confined to food and eatables only, whereas it is very comprehensive in its meaning and it covers everything that Allah has given to man—food, children, knowledge, law etc. etc. Instances can be cited from the Qurān and the Traditions in support thereof. Thus it has become obvious that according to this verse, in Allah’s sight it is wrong and sinful to adopt the attitude of independence towards every kind of rizq, including articles of food.

Thus it has become clear that the consequences of this misunderstanding about the meaning of rizq are far-reaching. As a result of this limited meaning of rizq, it will be sinful only to make the unlawful articles of food lawful and vice versa but it will not be sinful if the people become their own law-makers in regard to the social, economic, political and international matters. It is because of this misunderstanding that even some scholars of the Islamic Law do not consider it sinful if people do not take guidance from the “Shari‘at” in regard to matters other than those of food; whereas in this verse, Allah has taken to task all those people, who arrogate to themselves the right of making lawful or unlawful not only the articles of food but anything that has been made lawful or unlawful by the “Shari‘at.”

61. The question has been posed to impress how horrible and rebellious their crime is, as if to say, "How dare you make your own regulations contrary to those which Allah has given you, when, in fact, you yourselves are His creation? What do you think about the servant, who claims that he himself has the right to prescribe the limits concerning the things which his master has entrusted to his care, and therefore, there is no need of consulting him? How will you treat your own servant if he were to claim that he had every right to use and expend as he will all that belongs to you? Leave alone the case of that servant, who does not acknowledge at all that he has any master or that he is a servant and the things that are in his possession are not his but belong to some one else; for the case under discussion does not concern such a villainous usurper. The question has been posed concerning that servant, who himself acknowledges that he is a servant of some master and that the things in his possession belong to the master and not to himself. Yet he claims that he has the right to make rules and regulations and set limits for himself regarding the use of those things, and that there is no need for him to consult his master.

62. This question has been posed to corner the transgressors who arrogate to themselves the right to make rules and regulations in regard to the use they could make of the things of their Master. It is meant to impress on them that they have placed themselves in an awkward position by arrogating that right without any lawful authority. Their claim would have been valid, if the Master had Himself authorized them to make whatever laws they liked concerning the use of the things entrusted to the servants by Him. The pertinent question is whether they possessed any such authority from the Master, or were putting forward this claim without any delegation of such rights to them. If they had any such warrant they should show it: otherwise they would be guilty of two crimes—rebellion and forgery.

63. It is a pity that most of the servants are not grateful to the Master for this great favour that He has given them full instructions about the way they should live in His 'house' and the use they should make of His things and the conduct they should adopt, as if to say, "If you live in the world according to My instructions, you will win My approval and deserve the greatest rewards, but if you live as rebels, you would incur My wrath and merit a painful chastisement." Nay, instead of showing gratitude for this favour, many of the servants seem to think like this: "The Master ought to have left us in the world without any guidance and secretly watched us to see which of us was living in rebellion against His Law, and then punished the criminals." They do not seem to realize that if the Master had put them to this hard test none would have escaped punishment.

64. These things have been mentioned here in order to comfort the Holy Prophet and give a warning to his enemies. These are meant to lessen his worry and to strengthen him, as if to say, "We see all that you

are doing in propagating the Message of the Truth with great patience and fortitude, and exerting your utmost to reform mankind. Rest assured that We have not left you alone after entrusting you with this arduous duty. We are not unaware of whatever you are doing for the performance of your mission, and also whatever your enemies are doing to oppose you." On the other hand, a warning has also been administered to his opponents : "Don't remain under the delusion that no one is seeing what you are doing in opposing the Messenger of the Truth and the reformer of mankind? We are seeing whatever mischiefs you are doing and whatever obstacles you are placing in the way of the mission. We are keeping a detailed and accurate record of all these things. Therefore beware that you shall be called upon to render an account of all your doings".

65. This is a concise statement of a very important subject and requires a detailed explanation. The Qurān declares in a few words that all religions other than the Revealed one are false because they have been founded on mere philosophical research for the primary cause of the origin of the universe. The philosophical research is after all based on guess-work, and is in its very nature incapable of reaching the Truth. The right way of arriving at the Truth is to make a study of the signs (*e.g.* day and night) and of the Message of the Prophets in a dispassionate manner. For this is the only way of discovering the Truth : otherwise, if one follows wrong ways one shall always arrive at wrong conclusions. Let us now consider the several methods that different people have adopted in search of this knowledge:

The *mushriks* base their search wholly and solely on superstition.

The hermits and ascetics pretend and claim that they acquire that knowledge by means of contemplation and meditation and see the reality by peeping into the hidden. But the fact is that they do not see the reality; it is only a trick of their own imagination. They form a mental image and then concentrate their mind on it and eventually it takes the shape of the "reality."

The so-called philosophers claim to base their researches on rationalism but it is really only surmise and guess-work, even though they may give "logical" arguments and "sound" reasons in its support.

Then there are the scientists : though they follow the scientific method of research in the physical world, they abandon it completely in regard to their investigation into metaphysics and start to follow conjectures, surmises, and guess-work.

Then these groups invariably suffer from prejudices and are not inclined to understand the point of view of those who differ with them, and, therefore, obstinately stick to their own theories.

In this passage (VV. 66-67) the Qurān declares that this way of search after knowledge is basically wrong, as if to say, "The real cause of your deviation is that you base your search of Reality on mere surmise and

guess-work, and then, because of your prejudices, refuse to listen even to reasonable things. The result is that you have not only failed to arrive at the truth but also to judge rightly the Revealed Religion, presented by the Messengers.”

In contrast to the above ways of research, the Qurān presents its own way and asserts that it alone is the correct, rational and scientific way of arriving at the Truth. It is this : “The prerequisite for research is that you should give up your preconceived prejudices and listen to the Message of those who claim that their information about the Reality is based on “Knowledge” and not on surmises, guess-works, meditations and contemplations, abstract deductions etc. Then consider deeply the Signs in the universe to which the Qurān invites your attention. If these also point to the Reality they claim to reveal, then there is no reason why you should deny the Truth taught by those Messengers.” This is the basis of the philosophy of Islam. What a pity that even the Muslim philosophers have forsaken this way and followed in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle !

The Qurān has inculcated this method at many places and has over and over again presented many a phenomenon as a proof of the Reality, and taught the people how to arrive at the right conclusion so as to perceive the Reality. Accordingly, in verse 67, the Sign of the night and the day has been presented for the deep consideration of the people. The change of day and night is a wonderful Sign and clearly points to the Universal Designer and the All-Powerful Ruler; for it takes place by the turning of the earth on its axis and in relation to the sun with mathematical precision. This change is due to the great wisdom of the Designer and has a great purpose behind it because of its innumerable benefits for all that exists on the earth. This points out also to the Providence of the Creator for it demonstrates conclusively that He has made perfect arrangements for the existence of His creation. Moreover, this also shows that the Universal Designer is One and also that He is not playful but Wise and purposeful. This change points also towards the great Reality that He, being the Benefactor and Lord, is worthy of worship and none else. This is because every other being is provided with its requirements by this change of day and night and none provides others; therefore none of them can be the Lord and the Master. In the light of these Signs, how can, any other religion, based on mere surmise and guess-work, be considered to be true when it is compared with the Revealed Religion which is based on such clear Signs as these?

66. In the preceding passage people were taken to task for founding false religions on mere surmise and guess-work. In this passage the Christians and others, who believe that God has begotten a son, have been taken to task for this blasphemy which has no authority other than mere presumption.

67. The Arabic phrase **سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ** (*subhān-Allah*) is used to express
[Contd. on p. 46]

مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نَذَرْنَاهُمْ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَائْتِ
 عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأُ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَوْمَ يَكْفُرُونَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
 تَدْعُوا بِهِمُومًا قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ فِيكَ إِذْ جَاءَنَا اللَّهُ تَوَلَّيْنَاكَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ
 لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غِنَةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ
 فَمَا سَأَلْتُمْ مِنْ آجِرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أكونَ
 مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ
 خَلِيفَ وَاعْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۗ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
 الْمُذْرِبِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ
 فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ
 الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمُ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ
 بِآيَاتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ
 عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالَ مُوسَى اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَتَّقُونَ لِإِنَّمَا
 جَاءَكُمْ بِسِحْرٍ هَذَا ۗ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّحِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَلْفِتَنَّا عَمَّا
 وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا وَتَكُونَ لَكُمُ الْكِبْرِيَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمُ
 بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ائْتُونِي بِحُجٍّ سِحْرِ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحْرَةُ
 قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَى الْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَلَمَّا الْقُوا قَالَ مُوسَى مَا
 جِئْتُمْ بِهِ إِلَّا السَّحْرُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيَبْطِلُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾
 وَيُحِقُّ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَمَا أَمَّنَ لِمُوسَى إِلَّا
 ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ عَلَى خَوْفٍ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَهُمْ ۗ وَ

Recite⁶⁹ to them Noah's story, when he said to his people, 71-74
 "O my brethren, if it has become intolerable for you that I should dwell in your midst and preach to you the Revelations of Allah, then (note it well that) I have put my trust in Allah. You may muster all the partners you have set up and come to a united decision about me and consider your scheme well so that no aspect of the matter should remain hidden from you. Then bring that into action against me without giving me any respite.⁷⁰ If you have turned away from my Message, (I have lost nothing) for I did not demand any reward from you : my reward is with Allah, and I have been commanded to behave like a Muslim, (whether any other does so or not.)" But they disbelieved in him and the result was that We rescued those of them, who were with him in the Ark and made them successors on the earth and drowned those who rejected Our Revelations. So consider the end of those who were warned (but did not believe). After Noah We sent different Messengers to their peoples and they came to them with manifest Signs, but they would not believe in what they had disbelieved before. This is how We set a seal on the hearts of the transgressors.⁷¹

Then after them We sent Moses and Aaron with Our Signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs.⁷² But they showed arrogance,⁷³ for they were criminals. So when the Truth came to them from Us, they said, "This is clear sorcery."⁷⁴ Moses replied, "What, do you call the Truth sorcery, when it has come to you? Is this sorcery? The fact is that sorcerers can never attain true success."⁷⁵ In reply to this, they said, "Have you come to turn us away from the faith of our forefathers so that you two may dominate over the land?⁷⁶ We are not going to believe in what you say." And Pharaoh said (to his people), "Bring every expert sorcerer to me."— When the sorcerers came, Moses said to them, "Cast down whatever you have to cast." When they cast down their appliances, Moses said to them, "This is sorcery what you have cast down :⁷⁷ Allah will surely render it in vain for He does not let the plans of mischief-makers succeed. And Allah vindicates the Truth by His Commands, though the guilty ones may dislike it."

Contd. from p. 43]

astonishment at something apparently inexplicable. But its literal meaning is, "Allah is All-Pure, and is absolutely free from any defect, blemish and flaw". Here it implies both these things. It expresses astonishment at their blasphemy that Allah has taken a son to Himself, and also refutes it, saying, "Allah, being perfect in every way, does not stand in need of a son."

68. Three things have been put forward to refute their blasphemy : (1) Allah is pure and without any defect, (2) Allah is Self-sufficient in every way, and (3) Allah is the Owner of everything in the heavens and the earth. Let us now briefly explain how these three things refute that blasphemy.

It is obvious that a son is either sprung from the loins or is adopted. In the first case, such a conception of Allah amounts to this : He is mortal like every other being : therefore He stands in need of a spouse in order to propagate His offspring like other beings. In the second case, it shall have to be presumed that Allah stands in need of a son to inherit His Kingdom in order to make up, to some extent, for the deficiency that is caused by His childlessness. Or that Allah also cherished paternal love like human beings, and therefore, adopted as son one of the millions of His slaves.

Whatever be the case, it is obvious that the blasphemy shall have to be based on such a creed which presumes that Allah suffers from many defects, many weaknesses, many shortcomings and many wants. The Qurān refutes all such blasphemous creeds, saying, "He is All-Pure" and therefore, is free from all such defects; and by "He is Self-sufficient", the Qurān asserts that He does not suffer from any of those weaknesses and wants which impel the mortals to have children. Lastly, it says clearly that all the beings in the heavens and the earth belong to Him and that He has no particular relation with anyone of them so as to make such a one His 'son' or "only son" or heir apparent. Though it is true that Allah loves some of His slaves more than the others because of their excellences, it does not in any way mean that He raises such a one from the rank of a slave to that of a partner in His Godhead. For, the highest rank He bestows on them is that they are Allah's friends, "...who believe and fear Allah, (and therefore they) shall have no occasion for fear and sorrow. There is nothing but good news for them in this world and in the Hereafter." (VV. 62-63).

69. The story of Prophet Noah has been related here to serve as a warning to those who were rejecting the Message of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). Up to this place, arguments had been presented before them to show the errors of their creeds, thoughts and ways, and impressive appeals had been made to them to adopt the Right Way. But from here onward they are being warned of the consequences of the attitude they had adopted towards their Messenger and admonished

indirectly to learn a lesson from the fate of Prophet Noah's people, who had behaved towards their Prophet like the Quraish, the addressees. The Holy Prophet had been pointing out to them in a very befitting manner their errors and deviations, and was trying to correct them. But instead of considering and re-considering these things, they had become his mortal enemies, though he had no self-interest in his Mission and was extending the Message for their good, but they responded to his arguments with rudeness, abuses and stones. So much so that his very person had become intolerable and unbearable for them. This was because of their prejudices against the Right Way, which had so blinded them that they could not tolerate even the presence of the one who was following the Right Way. At this Allah commanded His Messenger to recite to them the story of Prophet Noah so that they might get in it the answer to their misbehaviour towards him.

70. This was a challenge that amounted to this : "I am not going to give up my Mission at all, whatever you may do against me, for I have my full trust in Allah." (For contrast please See V. 55 of HŪD).

71. The transgressors whose hearts are sealed are those obstinate and obdurate people who are so hardened against persuasion that they firmly and perversely adhere to the opinion they have once formed erroneously. As they themselves refuse to listen to counsel and admonition, Allah's curse falls on them and they are deprived of the ability of ever coming to the Right Way.

72. Explanatory Notes (84-111) concerning the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh, already added to Chapter VII, should be kept in view, as the things explained therein will not be repeated here.

73. "They showed arrogance" because of their wealth, power, pomp and show, and considered themselves above subjection to the Message. Therefore they showed haughtiness instead of surrender and obedience to it.

74. The story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh is being related also to serve as an object-lesson for the Quraish, who were behaving towards Prophet Muhammad in the same way as Pharaoh and his people had behaved towards Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon them); for the response to the Message by the Quraish was similar to that of Pharaoh's people. (Please refer to V. 2 of this Sūrah.)

In this connection, it will also be worthwhile to note that the Mission of Prophets Moses and Aaron was not merely to liberate the Israelites from the slavery of Pharaoh, as some people have opined. If we keep in view the context in which the story occurs here, it will be quite clear that they, too, were appointed to pursue the same Mission that was entrusted to all the Prophets from Noah to Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon them all). The theme of this Sūrah from its very beginning has been this : "Acknowledge Allah alone as your Lord and Deity for He is the Lord of the whole universe. Believe in the Life-after-death in which

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إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ السُّرِفِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَى
 يُقَوْمِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾
 فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَجِّنَا
 بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوَّأَا
 لِقَوْمِكَ بِمِصْرَ بَيْوتًا وَاجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشِّرِ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَآءَهُ زِينَةً وَ
 أَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَىٰ
 أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّىٰ يَرُوا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾
 قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَتِ دَعْوَتُكُمَا فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعِنَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَجُوزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ
 بَغْيًا وَعَدُوًّا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي
 آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ السُّلِيمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُ قَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ
 وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْفٰسِدِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلَقَكَ
 آيَةً ۗ وَإِنْ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنِ أَيَّتِنَا لَغٰفِلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ لَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِيَّ
 إِسْرَائِيلَ مَبَوَّأَ صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ۖ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ
 الْعِلْمُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾
 فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْئَلِ الَّذِينَ يُقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ
 قَبْلِكَ ۖ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَا
 تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ

(Then behold that) none but a few youths⁷⁸ from his own 83 people obeyed and followed⁷⁹ Moses because of the fear of Pharaoh and their own chiefs; for they apprehended that Pharaoh would afflict them with a torment. And the fact is that Pharaoh was mighty in the land : indeed he was one of those who do not hesitate to transgress any limit.⁸⁰

Moses said to his people, "O my people, if you sincerely 84-86 believe in Allah, put your trust in Him, if you are Muslims."⁸¹ They answered,⁸² "We have put our trust in Allah: 'Our Lord, do not make us a cause of trial⁸³ for the unjust people, and deliver us by Thy mercy from the unbelievers'."

And We inspired Moses and his brother : "Provide some 87 houses for your people in Egypt, and make those houses of yours as *qiblah*, and establish *ṣalāt*⁸⁴ and fill the Believers with hope and courage."⁸⁵

Moses prayed⁸⁶ and said, "Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed 88-89 on Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour⁸⁷ and possessions⁸⁸ in the worldly life; our Lord, hast Thou done this that they may lead astray the people from Thy Way? Lord, destroy their wealth and harden their hearts in a manner so that they may not believe till they see the painful torment."⁸⁹ Allah replied, "The prayer of you both has been granted; so be steadfast and follow not the way of those who have no knowledge."⁹⁰

And We led the children of Israel across the sea. Then 90-92 Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them with the intention of cruelty and oppression to them until, when he was drowning, he cried, "I have believed that there is no god but the real God in Whom the children of Israel have believed and I am of those who surrender."⁹¹ (In answer it was said :) "Now you believe! Whereas hitherto you had been rebellious and of the mischief-makers. Now We will preserve your dead body⁹² only to be a sign of warning for the succeeding generations, though there are many people who give no heed to Our Signs."⁹³

We gave an excellent abode⁹⁴ to the children of Israel and 93 provided them with the best things of life. Then they caused not dissensions among themselves until the knowledge had come to them.⁹⁵ Surely your Lord will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that in which they had been

differing.

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If you are in doubt regarding the Guidance We have sent down to you, you may enquire about this from those people who have been reading the Scriptures before you. In fact, it is the very Truth that has come to you from your Lord; so be not of those who doubt and join not those who treat Allah's Revelations as false; otherwise you shall be of the losers.⁹⁶

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you shall have to present yourselves before Allah and render the account of all you did in this world." Then the Sūrah makes it clear to those who rejected the Message that History bears witness to this that the true success of humanity has always followed the acceptance of this Message. Therefore it admonished them: "You should also accept the Message which has always been put forward by all the Messengers, and establish your life in its entirety on these Articles of Faith. For those who rejected the Message were destroyed in the end."

Thus it has become quite clear from the context in which their story occurs, that the main object of the Mission of Prophets Moses and Aaron was the same as that of all the other Prophets. It is true that one of their objects was also to liberate the Israelites (a Muslim Community) from the domination of a *kāfir* community, if it persisted in its unbelief. But this had a secondary place in their Mission, and was not its main object. The real object has been stated explicitly in LXXIX, VV. 17-19, wherein his Lord said to Moses: "Go to Pharaoh for he has transgressed the bounds of subjection and say to him, 'Are you prepared to reform yourselves and fear your Lord, if I guide you towards Him?'"

The part played by the two Prophets in liberating the Israelites from Pharaoh's slavery became prominent in History because he and his nobles rejected the Message and the Prophets had to rescue their people from their slavery. Accordingly, the Qurān gave it the same prominence as in History. But if one does not commit the error of isolating the details of the Qurān from its fundamental principles but studies them in the light of these principles, one cannot fall a prey to the misunderstanding that the mere liberation of a community could be the main object of the Mission of a Prophet and the propagation of the Message its secondary object only. (For further explanation see XX : 44-52, XLIII : 46-56, LXXIII : 15-16).

75. ".....the sorcerers can never attain true success" is meaningful for this is the answer to their charge: "This is a clear sorcery." It means this. "You have called the Signs of Moses a "sorcery" on account of its apparent likeness to it. You have not considered the clear and marked distinctions between the characteristics of the Prophets and sorcerers. Otherwise you would never have dared to make such an absurd charge. Have you ever seen a sorcerer go before a tyrant and talk boldly and fearlessly to him as Moses did, and admonish him for his deviation and

invite him to adopt the way of purity and God-worship? You know that a sorcerer behaves quite differently. He starts with the flattery of the courtiers so that they may obtain for him the permission to show his tricks. After this he goes to the presence of "His Majesty" and makes obsequious bows and very humbly requests him to see his tricks. Then he prays for his long life and prosperity and begs for his reward. Now, you can judge for yourselves whether the Prophet is a sorcerer or a far greater and far higher personality than even kings and the like."

76. It is obvious that if this demand had been merely for the liberation of the Israelites, there could have been no question of any threat to Pharaoh's kingdom. The threat was because of the Message which demanded subordination to the Truth, for it threatened the system which was based on *shirk* and on which depended the domination of Pharaoh and his chiefs and priests. (For further explanation see E.N. 66 of VII and E.N. 43 of XL.)

77. That is, "What I showed was not sorcery but sorcery is that which you are showing."

78. Though literally ذُرِّيَّةٌ (*Zur-riyyah*) means offspring, it has been translated into youths because the Qurān has used this word here to point out a specific aspect of the matter. It is this: during that fearful period of persecution only a few young men and women showed the moral courage of acknowledging the Messenger of the Truth as their leader and becoming his standard bearers. On the contrary, their fathers, mothers and elders had not the courage to follow him and endanger their worldly interests and even their lives. They not only followed the way of ease and expediency, but also discouraged their youths, saying, "Don't go near Moses: for you will thus invite trouble both for yourselves and your elders."

The Qurān has mentioned this particular aspect of the matter because the same was the case of the response to the Mission of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). In its initial stage, those who came forward were not the elders and the old people but some courageous youths. These first Muslims who were boldly facing persecution and enduring hardships for the sake of Islam were the young people. For instance, 'Alī-ibn-Abī Ṭālib, Ja'afar Ṭayyār, Zubair, Ṭalhāh, Sa'ad bin Abī Waqqās, Muṣ'ab bin 'Umair, 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, etc., were under twenty years when they embraced Islam. 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf, Bilāl, Suhail were under thirty years, and Abū 'Ubaidah-bin-al-Jarrāḥ, Zaid bin Ḥārithah, 'Uṭhmān bin 'Affān and 'Umar Fārūq were under thirty-five years. Abū Bakr was no more than 38 when he embraced Islam. Among the early Muslims, there is only one instance of a Companion, 'Ammār bin Yāsir, who was of the same age as the Holy Prophet and another of 'Ubaidah bin Ḥārith Muṭṭalabī, who was older than the Holy Prophet.

79. Some people have misinterpreted the Arabic words "فَمَا أَسْنِ لِمُوسَى"

and say that all the people of Israel were unbelievers and at first only a few of them believed in the Message. But when اِيْمَان (imān) is followed by the letter لَام (lām), it generally means obeying and following. Thus the original words of the text will mean (as translated) “—a few youths from his own people obeyed and followed Moses,” that is, “Only a few young people from the whole tribe of the Israelites had the courage to accept and acknowledge Prophet Moses as their leader and guide and stand by him in his struggle with Pharaoh and his chiefs.” The words that follow make it quite clear that the Israelites refrained from this not because they did not believe in Prophet Moses or his Message but because they (specially their elders) were afraid of exposing themselves to the persecution of Pharaoh. This state of fear was the result of their moral degeneration. Though all of them racially and religiously belonged to the community of Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and, therefore, were Muslims, yet slavery of centuries had so much degraded them that they had lost that spirit of Islam which impels one to become the standard-bearer of Islam against the domination of unbelief and deviation, or imbues one with the courage to stand by the one who had raised that banner.

The Bible has described their degraded condition at the time of the conflict with Pharaoh in EXODUS 5 : 20-21 : “And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh : And they said unto them, the Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our saviour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.” The TALMUD (Selections by H. Polano, page 152) confirms the same :

“Yea” said the overburdened children of Israel to Moses and Aaron, “We are like a lamb which the wolf has carried from its flock, the shepherd strives to take it from him, but between the two the lamb is pulled to pieces; between ye and Pharaoh will we all be killed.”

The Qurān also refers to this in VII : 129 :

“His people answered, ‘We were oppressed before you came and now again we are being oppressed after you have come’.”

80. The Arabic word مُسْرِفِينَ (musrifīn) literally means “transgressors”. As this could not express the true spirit, it has been translated into “...those who are not bound by any limits”. They are the people who do not hesitate to employ even the most wicked methods to achieve their object : who practise without any pangs of conscience cruelty, immorality, barbarism etc., if these serve their purpose, and who cross all limits in pursuit of their desires. In short, they are such people as know no limits to stop at.

81. The fact that Prophet Moses in his address called his people “Muslims” shows that all the people of the community of Israel were

Muslims; otherwise he could not say to them, "—if you are Muslims". He meant to urge them to be brave, saying, "If you are true Muslims, as you profess to be, do not fear the might of Pharaoh but put your trust in the might of Allah."

82. Those, who responded to the appeal of Prophet Moses, were those "youths" who obeyed and followed him, and not the Israelites, as a community, as is obvious from the context.

83. The prayer, "Our Lord, do not make us a cause of trial for the unjust people," is very comprehensive in meaning. Whenever the standard-bearers of the Truth rise up to establish virtue and eradicate the prevalent evil, they come into conflict with unjust people, who, for one reason or the other, are always on the look-out to find fault with them. First, there are the champions of falsehood, who try their level best to crush down with full force the champions of the Truth. Then there are the so-called champions of the Truth who profess to believe in it but are not prepared to enter into conflict with the powerful government of the time. Therefore they declare it to be a useless and foolish effort, and begin to invent excuses to justify the wrong stand they take in regard to the struggle with falsehood in order to silence the pricks of conscience they feel for their criminal attitude of cowardice. Accordingly, they try to prove that it is these standard-bearers of the Truth who are in the wrong and not they. Lastly, there are the common people, who watch the conflict as by-standers and join forces with those who prove to be more powerful of the two, whether they are the supporters of the Truth or of falsehood.

Now let us consider how the champions of the Truth are liable to become a cause of trial for these unjust people. If they are crushed down or defeated, the first group declares, "We were in the right and not these foolish people : otherwise they could not have been defeated." The second group says, "Their defeat has proved that they did not make the correct estimate of the circumstances and caused the destruction of valuable lives by coming in conflict with the mighty powers. Moreover, the *Shari'at* has not made it obligatory on us to expose ourselves to risk, when we are fulfilling the most essential religious duties without any restrictions from the tyrants of the day." As regards the common people, their criterion of judging the Truth is this : "Whatever triumphs is truth. Therefore their defeat has proved that the champions of the Truth must be in the wrong." Likewise every mistake and error the champions of the Truth commit, every weakness they show in the face of overwhelming odds against them, every moral fault to which anyone of them succumbs, becomes a good excuse for those who intend to stick to falsehood. Consequently, the "invitation" to the Truth becomes dormant for years after their "defeat".

Thus it has become quite clear that this prayer of the companions of Prophet Moses was well-timed and meaningful : "Our Lord, have mercy upon us so that we might not become a cause of trial for the unjust people : protect us from errors, defects and weaknesses and make our

efforts successful in this world so that we may become a source of goodness to Thy creatures and not a source of evil for the unjust people.”

84. There is a difference of opinion among the Commentators in regard to the meaning of this verse. As for me, I have considered deeply its wording and the circumstances under which this was sent down, and have come to the conclusion that Prophet Moses was commanded to build or acquire some houses for the establishment of *Ṣalāt* in congregation. This was necessitated because the system of *Ṣalāt* in congregation had been abandoned by the Israelites and the Egyptian Muslims as a result of their persecution by the government, and owing to the weakness of their faith. As this had brought about their disintegration and killed their religious spirit, it was essential to re-establish the system of *Ṣalāt* in congregation, which is indeed the first and foremost thing for the revival of that spirit and the integration of a scattered Muslim community and its powers.

As regards “...appoint your houses as *qiblah*”, I am of the opinion that it means : “...set apart these houses as common places of worship for offering *Ṣalāt* in congregation and the central places for holding their meetings. That is why it is followed by ‘and establish *Ṣalāt*’,” which means that they should offer their *Ṣalāt* collectively in congregation instead of individually.

85. The Arabic word ^{بَشِيرٌ} (*bashshir*) means : “Fill them with hope and courage by giving them the good news of success by the grace of Allah.” And they needed that very badly at that time, for they were full of despair, fear and depression.

86. This prayer was offered by Prophet Moses during the last period of his stay in Egypt. There was a long interval between this and the events mentioned in the preceding verse which happened during the early days of his Mission. The details of this intervening period are available at other places in the Qurān.

87. The Arabic word ^{زِينَةٌ} (*zīnat*) includes the magnificence, grandeur, glory and the apparent brilliance of their culture and civilization which attracted other people towards them with the desire of imitating them.

88. “Possessions”: resources and means which help the people like Pharaoh to put into practice all their devices and plans, and the lack of which prevents the standard-bearers of the Truth from carrying out their plans.

89. As it has already been stated, Prophet Moses made this prayer during the last period of his stay in Egypt. When he had shown many Signs, one after the other, to Pharaoh and his chiefs and pointed out the Way clearly to them, but they had persisted obdurately in their antagonism to the Truth, the Prophet begged his Lord to destroy their possessions and harden their hearts. And this was in accordance with the decree of

Allah. As they had merited this punishment according to the Divine Law of retribution, Allah decreed that they should not get the light of Faith, which they themselves had extinguished with their persistent disbelief.

90. In this verse, Allah has urged Prophet Moses and his followers to guard against a common misunderstanding that is likely to arise in such cases. It so happens that those people who have no knowledge of the reality and who do not understand the wisdom of Allah's ways are liable to believe from the apparent success of His rebels that perhaps it is His will that they should dominate in the world. When they witness the failures of the upholders of the Truth in their conflict with falsehood in contrast to the splendour and vast possessions of the champions of falsehood, they begin to think that Allah does not will to help the Truth in its conflict with falsehood. Therefore some foolish people further conclude from these wrong suppositions that it is useless to exert for the establishment of the Truth. Then they consider it to be the best and most proper thing to rest content with the little religiosity that the sovereignty of falsehood and unbelief allows them. That is why Allah has urged Prophet Moses and his followers to guard against such a misunderstanding and to carry on the Mission entrusted to them with patience under the adverse circumstances.

91. The Bible does not mention this happening but the Talmud says explicitly that when he was drowning he said, "Who is like Thee, O Lord, among the gods?"

92. Even today the place, where the dead body of Pharaoh was found floating, is pointed out by the inhabitants of that region. It lies on the western coast of the Sinai Peninsula and is now known by the name of Jabl-i-Fir'aun (Pharaoh's Mount). There is also near it a hot spring called Hammām-i-Fir'aun (Pharaoh's Bath), which is situated at a distance of a few miles from Abū Zenīmah, where, they say, Pharaoh's dead body was found lying.

If the Pharaoh who was drowned was Mineptah, who ruled over Egypt when Prophet Moses was sent to him, his embalmed dead body is still lying in the Cairo Museum. When Sir Grafton E. Smith removed the bandages from his mummy, a layer of salt was found on the body, which was a clear proof that he was drowned in the sea.

93. That is, "We show Signs to the people over and over again so that these should serve as warnings and be the means of teaching them lessons, but it is a pity that they do not learn lessons even from such Signs as the dead body of Pharaoh."

94. That is, "in Palestine after their exodus from Egypt."

95. This refers to the dissensions the Israelites had caused in the Divine Way and the new religions they had invented. This verse accuses them of falling into variances, even though they possessed the Divine Knowledge, which had provided them with the criterion of judging

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حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَ لَوْ جَاءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ حَتَّى
 يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾ فَلَوْ لَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ أَمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا
 قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا أَمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
 وَ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٨﴾ وَ لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ
 جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرَهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ مَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ
 أَنْ تُوْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَ يَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 قُلِ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ مَا تُغْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَ النَّذْرُ عَنْ
 قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ قَهْلُ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ
 قَبْلِهِمْ قُلِ فَانظُرُوا إِلَيَّ مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَ
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كَذَلِكَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنَجِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قُلِ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ
 إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
 وَ لَكِنِ اعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَكَّلُكُمْ وَ أَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَ أَنْ
 أَقِمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا وَ لَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَ لَا تَدْعُ مِنْ
 دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَ لَا يَضُرُّكَ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا مِنَ
 الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَ إِنْ يَسْسُكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَ إِنْ يُرِدْكَ
 بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ لِفَضْلِهِ يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ
 الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾ قُلِ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ
 فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَ مَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ
 بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَ اتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَ اصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ وَ هُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

The fact is that whatsoever Signs are shown to those 96-98: who have fallen under Allah's decree,⁹⁷ they will not believe till they see the painful torment. Then, is there any instance of a habitation that, seeing the torment, accepted the faith and that faith profited it? (There is no instance of this) except that of Jonah's people.⁹⁸ When they believed, We warded off the torment of ignominy from them in this worldly life⁹⁹ and allowed them to make use of the things of life for a while.¹⁰⁰

Had your Lord willed (that all the people of the world 99-100 should be believers,) all the dwellers of the earth would have believed in Him.¹⁰¹ Will you, then, force the people to become believers?¹⁰² No one can believe without Allah's permission,¹⁰³ and it is the way of Allah that He throws filth on those who do not use their common-sense.¹⁰⁴

Say to them, "Make a keen observation of all that is in 101-102 the heavens and the earth." And (the fact is that) the Signs and warnings are of no avail to those who would not believe.¹⁰⁵ Now what do they wait for but the evil days that befell the peoples before them? Say to them, "Well, wait and see, I, too, wait with you." Then, (when such a time comes,) We deliver Our Messengers and those who believed in them—This is Our Way : We have laid it on Ourselves to deliver the believers.

O Prophet, say,¹⁰⁶ "O mankind! if you are still in doubt 104-105 concerning my Faith, know that I do not worship those whom you worship beside Allah, but I worship that Allah alone, Who has the power to cause your death.¹⁰⁷ I have been commanded that I should be of the believers. I have also been bidden: 'Dedicate yourself sincerely, and exclusively and steadfastly to this Faith,¹⁰⁸ and be not at all of those who associate other gods with Allah.¹⁰⁹ And do not invoke beside Allah any being that can neither do you good nor harm : for if you will do so, you shall be one of the workers of iniquity. If Allah afflicts you with a calamity, there is none to remove it but He Himself. Likewise if He wills to bestow a favour on you, there is none to withhold His bounty. He bestows His bounty on anyone of His servants He wills. And He is Forgiving and Merciful'."

109109

O Muhammad, tell them, "O mankind ! the Truth has come to you from your Lord. Now, whosoever follows the Right Way, he does so for his own good, and whosoever goes astray, he does so to bring about his own ruin; and I am not a keeper over you." And, O Prophet, go on following the Guidance that has been revealed to you; persevere steadfastly till Allah passes His judgement, for He is the best of judges.

Contd. from p. 55]

between the Right Way and the wrong ways. They did this because of mischiefs of their hearts in spite of the fact that the Right Way had been made clear to them, and its fundamental principles had been imparted to them and instructions had been given about its implications and demands and its boundaries had been distinctly demarcated from those of the ways of unbelief. Besides, they had been admonished to follow the path of obedience and guard against the paths of disobedience, and establish their lives entirely in accordance with the rules and regulations based on that Knowledge, for they shall have to render an account of all they did in this life. But in spite of all the instructions that were given to them, they divided one original Religion into many divergent sects and built different ways on foundations other than those laid down by Allah.

96. Though these words were addressed to the Holy Prophet, they were meant for those who expressed doubts about his Message. As regards the reference to the people of the Book, it is because they possessed the Knowledge of the Scriptures, whereas the common people of Arabia lacked this, and were, therefore, strangers to the voice of the Qurān. It was also expected that their just and pious scholars would testify that its Message was the same as that of the Scriptures of the former Prophets.

97. Allah's decree that had become applicable to them was this : Allah does not thrust the Faith on those who do not seek after the Truth: who obstinately and obdurately shut their hearts against it with prejudice : who are so lost in the love of this world that they do not care at all about the Hereafter.

98. Though Prophet Jonah (860-784 B.C.) was an Israelite Prophet, he was sent to 'Irāq for the guidance of the Assyrians, who have been called the people of Jonah for this reason. At that time, Nineveh, a very ancient and famous city, was their capital. Its vast remains are scattered on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite to the city of Mosul, and one of the mounds bears the name of 'Prophet Jonah'. In order to form an estimate of the glory of these people, suffice it to say that the circumference of their capital Nineveh was 60 miles or so.

99. As regards the question why the threatened torment was warded off from the people of Jonah as an exception to the Divine principle, "After the decision of the torment, the profession of faith by any community does not benefit it," the Qurān does not give any details of this, but

merely refers to the story at three places. (See XXI : 87, 88; XXXII : 139-148; LXVIII : 48-50). Though the story contained in the Book of Jonah gives some details, these cannot be depended upon because it was neither composed by Prophet Jonah nor it is a Revealed Book but was written by some unknown person and then inserted in the Bible. Besides this, it contains some apparently absurd things which cannot be accepted as true. Nevertheless if we consider this deeply in the light of the allusions made in the Qurān and details in the Book of Jonah, the explanation given by various commentators of the Qurān seems to be correct.—Prophet Jonah left the place of his Mission without Divine permission after warning the people of the torment. Therefore Allah forgave the Assyrians, when they repented after seeing some Signs of the coming torment. This was in accordance with the Divine principles as stated in the Qurān. For, according to one of these, Allah does not inflict any torment on any people, till He has the Message fully demonstrated to them. As the Prophet did not continue his admonition in accordance with the appointed term and left the place of his Mission of his own accord, Allah's justice did not inflict the chastisement because the legal argument against his people had not been fulfilled. (For further explanation see E.N. 85 of XXXVI).

100. When the Assyrians believed in the Message, they were given a new lease of life. But after some time, they adopted the wrong ways of thought and deed. Prophet Nahum (720-698 B.C.) warned and admonished them but without any effect. Then Prophet Zephaniah (640-609 B.C.) gave them the last warning that "he... will destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation" but it also proved in vain. At last in about 612 B.C., Allah made the Medes dominant over them.

The Median king, with the help of the Babylonians, invaded Assyria, and their army was defeated and was besieged within the walls of Nineveh. They put up a stiff resistance for some time but then the floods in the Tigris swept away the city wall and the invaders swarmed into the city and burnt it to ashes along with the surrounding countryside. The Assyrian king set fire to his palace and was himself burnt to death. Thus the Assyrian Empire and its culture came to an end for ever. The recent archaeological excavations reveal widespread effects of the fire.

101. This refers to the freedom that Allah has granted to mankind to believe or not to believe in Him. Otherwise He could have very easily created all the people as born believers and obedient servants and there would have been no disbelief and disobedience at all on the earth. Or He could have very easily inspired them to turn towards belief and obedience. But these methods would have defeated the wisdom that underlies the creation of mankind.

102. This does not at all mean that the Holy Prophet desired to force people to become believers, and that Allah was forbidding him to do this. In fact, the Qurān has here adopted the same method of admonishing the people that it has adopted at many other places, that is, though the words have apparently been addressed to the person of the

Holy Prophet, in fact, these have been addressed to the people. The implication is this: "O people! Our Messenger has made the distinction between the Guidance and deviation quite clear and plain by argument and pleading. Now, therefore, it is for you to believe or not to believe in the Guidance. If you accept that some one should force you to adopt the Right Way, you should know that this 'duty' has not been assigned to Our Prophet. Had Allah willed this, He could have done it Himself: then there would have been no need of sending any Prophet to you."

103. This is to emphasize the principle that the bestowal of all these blessings is in the power of Allah alone: therefore none can acquire or bestow on anyone any blessing without the permission of Allah. As faith and guidance also are blessings, they, too, can be acquired only with Allah's permission; and no one can acquire these without His permission nor bestow these on anyone else, even though one should desire to do so. That is why, even if the Prophet had sincerely desired to make people believers forcibly, he could not have done this, for this could be done only with Allah's permission and help.

104. This points out clearly that the above principle is not applied blindly and irrationally so as to bestow the blessing of faith on or withhold it from anyone without any rhyme or reason, but it works according to a system which is based on wisdom. Allah bestows this on anyone who uses his common-sense properly in search of the Truth, for Allah provides for such a one the means of attaining it in proportion to the sincerity of his intention and the extent of his exertion and grants him its correct knowledge required for faith. But He throws the filth of ignorance, deviation, wrong thinking and wrong doing on the one who is not a seeker after the Truth and does not seek the Truth and does not use his common-sense properly because of his prejudices, or does not use it at all in search of the Truth. And this is what such people deserve.

105. This is the answer to the condition that they would believe him to be a true Prophet, if a Sign would be shown to them. The Holy Prophet has been asked to say to them, "There are countless Signs in the heaven and the earth, which confirm and testify the Message I am giving you. You could have easily recognized them, had you observed and considered them with open eyes and open hearts. But if you lack this urge and desire for the Truth, you will not accept and acknowledge it, however wonderful, miraculous and supernatural the sign may be, for you will declare that it was a piece of sorcery like Pharaoh and his chiefs. The fact is that the people, who suffer from this malady, see the Truth only when the torment with all its horrors overtakes them, just as Pharaoh came to believe only when he was drowning. But you should note it well that the repentance at the time of punishment is of no avail.

106. In this concluding portion, the same thing that was stated at the beginning of the discourse, has been re-iterated. Therefore it will be worthwhile to keep in view the introductory passage (VV. 1-10).

107. The Arabic word **يَتَوَقَّعُكُمْ** literally means "gives you death", but it has been purposely translated into "who has power to cause your death" in order to convey its real spirit in the context it occurs. It implies this: "I worship only that One, who has full power over your life: He has complete authority and power to let you live as long as He wills and cause you to die at any moment He wills. That is why I am fully convinced that I should submit and surrender, worship, serve and obey Him alone."

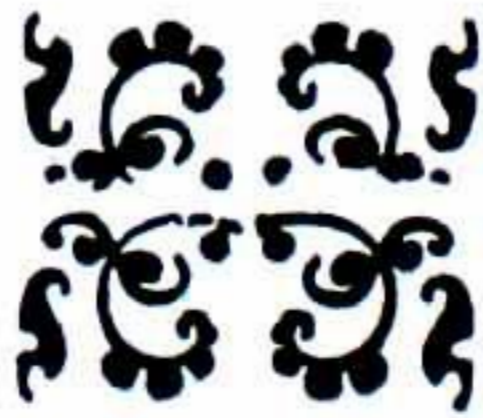
Now let us consider why of all His characteristics, this quality of Allah was specifically cited here. This was to bring home to the *mushriks* of Makkah that the doctrine of *shirk* was absolutely false. For they also believed (and all the *mushriks* have always believed) that death is entirely in the hands of Allah, the Lord of the universe, and none else has any power over it; so much so that they confessed that even those beings, whom they believed to be partners with God in other qualities and powers of His, could not avert death even from themselves. Thus the mention of this quality of Allah along with the statement of the Doctrine of *Tauhid* has been made to serve as a proof of that creed. That is, "I serve Him only for He alone has the full power over life and death. Why should, then, I serve others who have no power at all over their own lives and deaths, not to mention the lives and deaths of others?" The eloquence and force of the statement has been enhanced manifold by saying, "...Who gives you life and death" instead of "...Who gives me life and death". For this contains the statement of the Doctrine, its proof and invitation to it, all the three combined in one concise sentence. Had it been said, "...I serve that one Who gives me death," then it would have implied, "I alone should serve Him". But by saying, "...Who gives you death" the implication is: "It is not only I, who should serve Him, but you also should serve Him. For it is absolutely wrong to serve any other than Allah, Who alone has such powers."

108. The force of the Arabic words of the text **اقم وجهك للدين** (**اقم وجهك للدين**), "Dedicate yourself sincerely, exclusively and steadfastly to this Faith", is worth deep consideration. The purpose might have been served by the use of such words as "Adopt this Faith" or "Follow this Faith". But Allah considered such expressions as weak and incapable of serving the real purpose, which is implied in the wording of the Text. For the literal meaning of **اقم وجهك** is "Set your face steadfastly", which implies, "You should steadfastly turn your face in one direction only, without turning it even slightly to right or left, or backward, and go on marching in the same direction." Though these words were in themselves quite sufficient, the addition of the word **حنيئاً** made it all the more forceful.

For **حَنِيفٌ** (*Hanif*) is one who turns away from all others and exclusively turns to one direction. Thus what Allah demands is this: "Adopt this Faith, this Way of the worship of Allah and this way of life in such a manner that your worship, subjection, submission, servitude and obedience should be dedicated exclusively to Allah, the Lord of the universe, so that you do not deviate in the least after adopting this Way, you should have nothing to do with those ways that you have discarded and that you should not even have a look at the crooked paths that erroneous people follow."

109. This negative way of forbidding *shirk* has been purposely adopted. It implies this: "You should not at all be one of those, who set up in any way whatsoever other gods as partners with Allah in His essence, His attributes, His rights and His powers, whether that god be one's ownself or another man or a group of men or some spirit or *jinn* or angel or some material or imaginary being." The demand of *Tauhid* has been made both in the positive form, "Dedicate... Faith", and in the negative form, "and be not... other gods with Allah." Thus it forbids *shirk* both in creed and in deed, in individual and in collective life, in places of worship and in education, in courts and in legislative assemblies in political and in economic activities. Therefore it demands from the worshipper of *Tauhid* to adopt a different way in every aspect of life from the way of those who adulterate God-worship with ungodly worships, for the former can never be a fellow traveller with those who practise *shirk*. As such things can never be expected from him, it can never be imagined that he would follow them.

Thus it is clear that it cuts at the very root of *shirk*, both (*jali*) open and (*khafi*) hidden. As a matter of fact, *shirk* in its latter form is even more dangerous and should therefore be avoided most scrupulously. This warning is necessary, as some foolish people consider it to be almost harmless just because it is hidden. The fact is that open *shirk* is like an avowed enemy who makes an attack in the open and hidden *shirk* is like an enemy in the guise of a friend. Or the former is like a disease of which the symptoms are quite apparent and the latter like the hidden disease that gradually undermines one's health. Thus it is obvious that when the 'open' *shirk* comes into conflict with the Faith of *Tauhid*, it may be cured. But the one who suffers from the 'hidden' *shirk* does not realize the threat posed by it and slowly and gradually succumbs to it, while the victim remains quite unaware that his Faith is being devoured by the deadly secret enemy.



XI

هُود ھود

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XI

HŪD هُود

INTRODUCTION

Name

This Sūrah has been named after Prophet Hūd whose story has been related in vv. 50-60.

Period of Revelation

If we consider its theme deeply, we come to the conclusion that it was revealed during the same period as Sūrah Yūnus and most probably followed it immediately.

Subject

The Sūrah deals with the same subject as Sūrah Yūnus, that is, invitation to the Message, admonition and warning, with this difference that the warning is sterner. This is also supported by a Tradition :

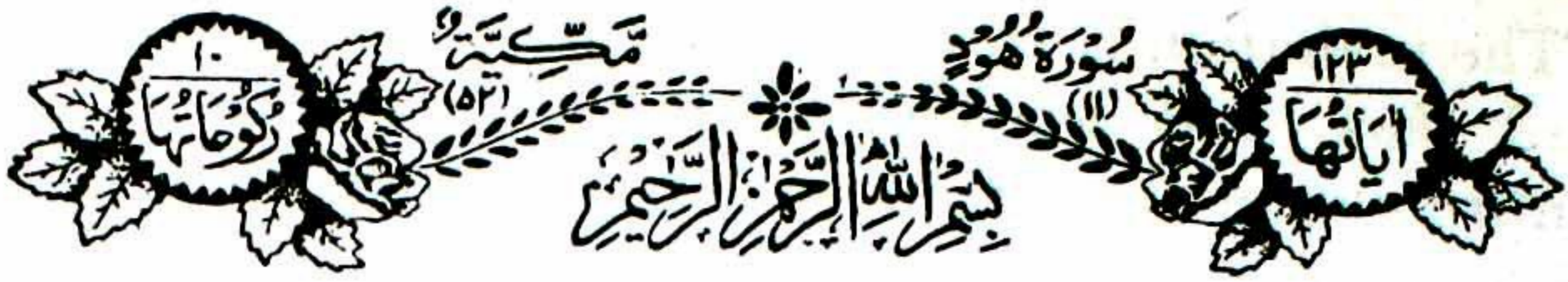
It is related that after its revelation, once Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr said to the Holy Prophet, "Of late I have been noticing that you are growing older and older. What is the cause of it?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Sūrah Hūd and the like Sūrahs have made me old." This shows that it was a very hard time for the Holy Prophet and these stern warnings added greatly to his anxieties that were caused by the persecution from the Quraish, who were doing their worst to crush down the Message of Islam. For it was obvious to the Holy Prophet that the last limit of the respite given by Allah was approaching nearer and nearer, and he was afraid lest the term of the respite should expire and his people be seized by the torment.

The invitation is this: Obey the Messenger of Allah; discard *shirk*, and worship Allah and Allah alone: establish the entire system of your life on the belief that you shall be called to account in the Hereafter.

The admonition is this: Remember that those people who put their faith in the outward appearance of this worldly life and rejected the Message of the Prophets met with dire consequences. Therefore you should consider it seriously whether you should follow the same way that history has proved to be the path to ruin.

The warning is this: You should not be deluded by the delay in the coming of the punishment: it is because of the respite that Allah has granted you by His grace so that you might mend your ways: if you do not make use of this opportunity, you shall be inflicted with an inevitable punishment that will destroy you all except the Believers.

Instead of addressing the people directly, the Qurān has used the stories of the people of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Shu'aib and Moses to achieve the above-mentioned objects. What is most prominent in their stories is that when Allah passes His judgement on the people, He does not spare anyone whatsoever, even if he be the nearest relative of the Prophet of the time. Only that one is rescued who had believed in the Prophet, and none else, not even his own son or wife. More than that: the Faith demands from each and every Believer that he should totally forget his relationships when that judgement comes and remember only the relationship of the Faith. For it is against the spirit of Islam to show any regard whatsoever for the relationships of blood and race. And the Muslims demonstrated these teachings practically in the Battle of Badr, four years after the revelation of this Sūrah.



الرِّفْقِ كِتَابٌ أَحْكَمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ ۝۱۱ إِلَّا تَعْبُدُوا
 إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ۝۱۲ وَإِنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا
 إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ
 فَضْلَهُ ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ۝۱۳ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ
 مَرْجِعُكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝۱۴ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ يَتَّبِعُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ
 لِيَسْتَكْفُرُوا مِنْهُ ۖ إِلَّا جِئْنَ يَسْتَكْفِرُونَ ۖ ثِيَابَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا
 يُعْلِنُونَ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ۝

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّمَهَا وَ

مُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۖ كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ۝۱۵ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ
 عَمَلًا ۖ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ۝۱۶ وَلَئِنْ أَخْرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ
 مَّعْدُودَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ مَا يَحِبُّهُ ۖ إِلَّا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَ
 حَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ۝۱۷ وَلَئِنْ أذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً
 ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَيَكْفُرُ ۝۱۸ وَلَئِنْ أذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضِرَاءٍ
 مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ۝۱۹ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
 صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ۝۲۰ فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ

XI

HUD ھود

Revealed at Makkah

Verses: 123

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Alif Lām Rā. It is an Edict,¹ whose contents have been made firm and issued in detail² by the All-Wise and All-Aware: (it is this): "You should worship none but Allah—I am indeed a warner and also a bearer of good news from Him to you—And you should ask forgiveness of your Lord: then return to Him and He will provide you with good provisions of life till an appointed term.³ And He will bestow His favours on everyone who deserves His favours.⁴ But if you turn away, I am afraid you shall meet with the torment of a dreadful day. To Allah you shall all return and He has power over everything." 1-4

Behold! They turn aside their chests in order to hide themselves from him.⁵ Beware! Even when they cover themselves with clothes, Allah knows alike what they conceal and what they show; indeed He knows even the secrets they conceal in their breasts. There is no moving creature on the earth, whose sustenance does not depend on Allah: He knows its dwelling place and its repository.⁶ Everything has been recorded in an open register. 5-6

And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days—whereas before this His Throne rested upon water⁷—so that He may test which of you does the best deeds.⁸ Now, O Muhammad, if you tell them, "You will, O people, be raised again after death," those who disbelieve, promptly exclaim, "This is plain sorcery!"⁹ And if We defer their punishment to some definite and reckoned time, they say, "Well, what is it that is delaying this?" Listen! When the day of that punishment comes, no one shall be able to avert it from them, and that very thing which they are ridiculing, shall encircle them on all sides. 7-8

If We show man Our mercy and then deprive him of it, he is filled with despair and shows ingratitude. And if after the adversity that had visited him, We bestow favours upon him, 9-11

he says, "All my sorrows have gone from me," and grows over-jubilant and arrogant.¹⁰ Only those are free from this, who are steadfast¹¹ and do good deeds: they are the ones who will have forgiveness and a rich reward.¹²

1. The Arabic word كِتَاب (kitāb) has been translated into "Edict" because of the context. For its meaning is not confined to "book" or "something written", but it includes "command" and "sovereign decree" as well and has been used in several places in the Qurān in the same sense.
2. The contents of this "Edict" are firm, strong, and unchangeable: they are well-balanced and measured : there is no tinge of verbosity, pedantry, volubility, poetic fancy and rhetorical exaggeration. The truth has been stated accurately, and there is nothing more and nothing less than the truth. Moreover, the contents have been given in detail and everything has been made so clear and plain that there is neither confusion nor complication nor ambiguity in it.
3. The assurance that "He will provide you with good provisions of life . . ." has been given to remove the misunderstanding which Satan has imbued in the heart of every foolish worshipper of the world that piety ruins one's worldly life, though it might lead to one's success in the Hereafter. Allah has re-assured the true believers that He will shower His blessings on God-fearing people and they will live happy and peaceful lives and will be honoured and respected everywhere. The same thing has been stated in a different manner in XVI : 97 : "Whoso will do good deeds, whether a man or a woman, provided the one is a believer, We will surely make such a one lead a pure and clean life in this world." Allah has refuted this theory of Satan and his disciples that piety inevitably brings poverty, distress and affliction and ignominy to the person who adopts truth, righteousness and virtue. He has assured that He will make the life of the one who will believe in Him and adopt a righteous life truly successful both in this world and in the Hereafter. And it is common experience that only those people enjoy real peace of mind and are honoured and respected who are God-fearing and possess a pure character; who are fair and generous in all their affairs and dealings and who are free from evil. For they are trusted by all and none fears any wrong or wickedness from them.

According to the Qurān, the provisions of life are either "good provisions" (مَتَاعٌ حَسَنٌ) or "deceptive provisions" (مَتَاعٌ غَرُورٌ). Here those, who return to Allah, have been assured that they will be given "good provisions" of life and not "deceptive ones". The provisions are "good" if their recipient becomes even more grateful to Allah than before and uses these for fulfilling His rights and the rights of mankind and of his own self. Such "good provisions" make his life truly successful in this world and also in

the Next World. On the contrary, the provisions are "deceptive", if they become a temptation for the recipient, and get him involved in the worship of the things of this world more than before. Though "the deceptive provisions" might appear to be a blessing and a "favour", these are, in fact, a curse and means of some future torment.

4. This verse enunciates a fundamental Divine Principle. The higher a person rises in character and conduct, the higher is the rank he obtains in the sight of Allah. That is to say that Allah does not let go waste the good deed of anyone. He does neither appreciate any evil deed, nor detracts from any good deed. Everyone will be given the honour which he deserves for his deeds.

5. They were those people of Makkah, who though not very active in their antagonism against the Message of the Holy Prophet, nevertheless were very averse to it. Therefore they did not like to hear it nor come face to face with him, and did their very best to avoid him. If, by chance, they found him sitting somewhere and talking to the people, they would at once turn back on their heels. Or if they saw him coming towards themselves they would slink away or hide their faces with cloth for fear that he might address them and convey his Message to them. As they did not have the courage to face the Truth, they would bury their heads ostrich-like and make believe that the Reality from which they were hiding had disappeared, whereas it was all along there and watching their ridiculous attempts to hide from it.

6. That is, "It is foolish on your part to deceive yourselves that you can escape punishment by hiding yourselves from Allah Who has full and perfect knowledge of everything: Who knows the nest where the tiniest sparrow lives and the hole where the smallest insect resides, and provides their sustenance to them wherever they be : Who knows the dwelling place and the final resting place of every creature and gives life and death to them at the appointed time. Do you think that by hiding yourselves from His Messenger, you can also hide yourselves from the All-Knowing Sovereign Who has sent him? Do you think that Allah does not see His Messenger doing his very best to convey His Message to you and you are trying to turn a deaf ear to it?"

7. This is a parenthetical clause that has probably been inserted in answer to a question, which has not been cited : if the heavens and the earth were created afterwards in six days, what was there before their creation? The answer is : then there was water. It is not possible for us to say what exactly was the nature of that water. It might have been the common liquid known by that name. Or perhaps, the word "water" has been used as a symbol for the fluid state of the matter before it was changed to its present form. As regards "His Throne rested on water", I am of the opinion that it means : "His Kingdom was over water."

8. This enunciates the purpose of the Creation : Allah created the

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بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ
كُتُبٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾ أَمْ
يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ ۖ وَادْعُوا مَنْ
اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ فَأَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ
فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ مَنْ
كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا
يُبْخَسُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ ۗ وَحِطَّ مَا صَنَعُوا
فِيهَا وَبِطْلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ أَفَسَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيْتِهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ
مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابٌ مُّوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ
بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ ۗ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ
لَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ
يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ
اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۗ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءٍ ۗ يُضَعَّفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۗ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا
كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾
لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْآخِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ
أَخْتَبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ
كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْبَحِ وَالْبَصِيرِ ۗ وَالسَّبِيْعِ ۗ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيْنَ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَ

وقف لازم

So, O Prophet, be on your guard lest you should omit (to 12
recite) some of the things which are being revealed to you,
and be not distressed at heart that they would say, "Why has
no treasure been sent down to him?" Or "Why has no angel
come with him?" You are only a warner and Allah has
everything in His power and charge.¹³

Do they say, "He has invented the Book himself?" Say 13-14
to them, "Very well, if it is so, bring ten fabricated sūrah
like this: and you may call to your assistance whomsoever (of
your deities) you can except Allah, if you be right (in con-
sidering them your deities). Now if they (your deities) do
not come to your help, you should know that this Book has
been revealed with Allah's knowledge, and that there is no
true deity other than Allah. Do you then surrender to this
(which is the very Truth)?"¹⁴

Those who desire this worldly life and its splendours,¹⁵ 15-16
are given the full reward of their works here and nothing is
detracted from it. But there is nothing except the Fire¹⁶ for
them in the Next World. (There they shall come to know)
that all that they did in this world had come to nought and
whatever they did was useless and worthless.

In contrast (to the worshippers of the world), there was 17
one who had a clear evidence from his Lord;¹⁷ then came a
witness from Him (testifying that evidence¹⁸) and there
existed before him the Book of Moses as a Guidance and a
blessing: (can such a one also reject the Message? Nay,)
such people will believe in it.¹⁹ And whosoever of the peoples
will reject it, he shall have that promised abode which is Hell.
So, O Prophet, have no doubt at all about this: for this is
indeed the Truth from your Lord, though most people do not
believe in it.

And who can be more unjust than the one who ascribes 18-24
false things to Allah?²⁰ Such persons shall be brought before
their Lord and the witnesses will say, "These are the people
who ascribed false things to their Lord." Beware! Allah's
curse rests upon the unjust people²¹—on those unjust people,²²
who debar others from Allah's Way and seek to make it
crooked;²³ and who disbelieve in the Hereafter. They were
unable to frustrate Allah on the earth,²⁴ nor had they pro-

tectors to defend them against Allah. Now they shall be given double chastisement:²⁵ for they would neither listen to others nor see the Truth for themselves. These are the people who brought about their own loss and all that they had invented vanished from them.²⁶ No doubt they shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter. As regards those who believed and did righteous works and dedicated themselves exclusively to their Lord, most surely they shall be the dwellers of Paradise and shall abide there for ever.²⁷ These two groups may be likened to two men, one of whom is blind and deaf, and the other can see and hear. Can they be alike and equal?²⁸ Do you not learn a lesson (from this example)?

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heavens and the earth for the sake of the creation of mankind and He created mankind to test human beings by delegating to them the powers of vicegerency and making them morally responsible for using or abusing them, just as they liked. Thus it has been emphasized that the sole purpose of the Creation is the moral trial of man and his consequent accountability to the Creator for the use or abuse of the delegated powers, and the award of rewards and punishments. For without this basic purpose, the whole work of Creation would have become meaningless and useless.

9. That is, "The disbelievers very foolishly considered the purpose of the Creation to be no more than a pastime in which they themselves were mere playthings. They were so absorbed in their foolish conception that when the Holy Prophet told them what the real purpose of Creation was and what part they were required to play in it, they would scoff at him, saying, "Your Message is like a piece of sorcery and beyond our understanding."

10. This disgraceful characteristic of man has been mentioned here because the disbelievers were exhibiting it at that time. When the Holy Prophet warned them of the consequences of their disobedience to Allah, they would scoff at him as if to say, "Are you mad? Can't you see our prosperity and power? We are enjoying all the good things of life and dominating over everything and everyone all around us. How is it that you are prophesying torment for us?"

The above-mentioned arrogant behaviour was due to the disgraceful human characteristic which has been mentioned in this verse. It is this : Man is, by nature, shallow and superficial and lacks the depth of thought. Therefore, when he enjoys prosperity and power he becomes joyous, arrogant and boastful; so much so that he never even dreams of any possibility that his happy condition would ever come to an end. And if and when adversity befalls him, he becomes an embodiment of despair

and begins to complain of his misfortune here, there, and everywhere; so much so that he does not hesitate even to abuse God and taunt at His Godhead. But whenever there is a change for the better in his fortune, he again begins to brag of his fore-sight, wisdom and success. That is why the disbelievers were exhibiting such a shallow and superficial characteristic in answer to the warning of the Holy Prophet. They forgot that Allah was deferring their punishment because of His mercy to give them sufficient time to consider well their absurd attitude and mend their ways during the respite given to them, and not to delude themselves by imagining that their prosperity had very deep foundations and would last for ever.

11. Here صَبْرٌ (*ṣabr*) (fortitude) implies another meaning also, that is, "steadfastness" the antonym of shallowness etc. etc., that has been mentioned in the preceding verse. Those "who are steadfast" remain firm and unwavering in their purpose in spite of the vicissitudes of life. They are not influenced by the changes of circumstances, but stick to the right, reasonable and correct attitudes they have adopted. They do not give themselves airs nor become intoxicated nor over-jubilant and boastful, if they win power, prosperity and name. On the contrary, they are neither subdued nor depressed if they are visited by adversity. In short, they come out successful in their trial by Allah, whether it be in the shape of favour or adversity and remain steadfast in both the cases.

12. This is the favour that Allah shows to such people; He forgives their shortcomings and gives them rich rewards for their good deeds.

13. In this verse, Allah has comforted and urged His Messenger to propagate the Message without the least hesitation and not to waver in his determination for fear of ridicule or for lack of response from his people. He should convey the Message in its entirety and leave the result to Allah for He has full power over everything. In order to grasp its full significance, we should keep in view the circumstances that necessitated it.

At the time of this Revelation, the Quraish were the most powerful and influential of all the clans. As they were the guardians of the Ka'abah (Makkah), the religious centre of the Arabs, they enjoyed religious, economic, and political superiority over the whole of Arabia. Thus it was quite natural that they should resent and oppose that Message which proclaimed, "The religion of which you are the leaders is absolutely false, and the system of life you are following is rotten to the core. As you are rejecting the Message, torment of Allah is threatening you. The only way of escape from it is that you should accept the Right Way and the righteous system of life I have brought from Allah." Obviously this Message struck a hard blow at their "superiority" and therefore they were averse to it from the very beginning.

The second reason why they did not accept it was that the Messenger possessed nothing extraordinary to convince the people of his Prophethood except his pure character and his rational, and understandable Message. Then for the Quraish, there was nothing to warrant a torment

from Allah except the rotten condition of their religion, morality and culture. On the contrary, there was "prosperity" to delude them that that was a sure sign of the favours of Allah and of their "gods" and "goddesses", which was a clear proof that the ways they were following were the "right" ways. The inevitable result was that only a small minority of those people, who had sound minds and hearts, accepted the Message and the remaining large majority became hostile to it. Then some of them tried to suppress the Message by persecutions and some did their worst to defame it by false accusations and frivolous objections and others resorted to calculated indifference to discourage it. There were still others who adopted an attitude of ridicule, derision, taunt and mockery in order to make light of it.

The above condition went on for many years and was liable to fill one with despair and discouragement. Therefore the Sovereign reassured His Messenger, as if to say, "We disapprove of these shallow, superficial and mean people, who are trying to make your mission a failure by their prejudice, indifference, ridicule, mockery and frivolous objections. You should go on following the Right Way with perseverance and courage : you should go on proclaiming the Truth that has been revealed to you without the least hesitation : you should never be afraid of propagating the Message for fear of ridicule or indifference : you should go on inculcating the Truth in its entirety whether anyone accepts it or rejects it for it is Allah Who has everything in His power and charge and He alone affords guidance to everyone He considers fit for it."

14. Here one and the same argument has been advanced to prove two things. First, the Qurān has been revealed by Allah. Secondly, it proves the truth of the doctrine of *Tauhid*. The argument is this :

- (1) "You say that the Qurān has not been revealed by Allah but has been devised and invented by myself and ascribed to Him. If your claim had been genuine you would have been able to invent a book like this in answer to the challenge I have given you over and over again. As you have failed to do so even with your combined resources and forces, my claim that it has been revealed with Allah's knowledge has been proved absolutely, fully and completely."
- (2) "Then there was a two-fold challenge from the Qurān to your deities but they utterly failed to meet it. They were challenged to come to your aid and help produce a book like the Qurān. As they have not helped you, it is a clear proof that they are absolutely powerless and have no share at all in Godhead. You have seen that they have not only failed in this decisive test, but have also proved to be impotent to defend themselves against the open attacks made on them in this Book, which asks the people not to worship them for they have no share in the powers of Godhead. These things have proved that there is nothing Divine in them and you have made them your deities without rhyme or reason".

Incidentally, this verse shows that chronologically this Sūrah was revealed earlier than Sūrah Yūnus. For at first they were challenged in this Sūrah to bring ten Sūrahs like the Sūrahs of the Qurān, but they failed to do so. Then in Sūrah Yūnus they were challenged (V. 38) to bring even one Sūrah like this. (X : 38 and E.N. 46).

15. This general statement has been made in continuation of the theme of the preceding verses, to refute the false excuses of the disbelievers mentioned therein for rejecting the Message of the Qurān. This verse says that in general those people who rejected the Qurān then (and are rejecting it now) were the worshippers of this world and its pleasures. As the root cause of their rejection was (and is) this false creed that there is nothing more valuable than the pleasures of this world and its material gains, there should be no restrictions (like the ones imposed in the Qurān) on their acquisition. They first made this choice, and afterwards invented arguments (like the ones mentioned in the Qurān) to deceive their own minds and those of others.

16. This is a clear and stern warning to the worshippers of the world. They should know that they will get the full reward for the exertions (whatever they be) they put forth in order to acquire the worldly gains but they should note it well that they would get nothing in the Next World. As they confined their efforts to the benefits of this world, and did nothing to earn the benefits of the Next World, they should expect nothing for the deeds they have done for the material gains of this world. In order to illustrate this, let us take the case of a person who desires to build a palace for himself in this world and adopts all those devices, measures and means which help build such a palace. Most surely, he will succeed in building a grand palace, for no brick will refuse to stick to its place simply because he was an unbeliever. But it is equally obvious that he shall have to leave behind in this world that grand palace along with all its furnishings as soon as he breathes his last breath. For there is no reason why the palace he had built (or done anything else) for this world, should be credited to him in the Next World, if he had done nothing to provide himself with a palace in the Next World. For only those who provide for themselves with the necessary material for a palace in the Next World in accordance with the Divine Law, deserve to get a palace there.

Now a question arises in regard to the logical conclusion of this argument, according to which he should not get a palace in the Next World. It is this: "Well, he may not get a palace, but why should he be thrown into the Fire of Hell? The answer is this (and the Qurān itself has given this same answer in different places) that the one who exerts and works only for a palace in this world in utter disregard of the Hereafter, naturally and inevitably adopts such measures and means as help build a large Fire for himself in the Hell. (Please refer to E.N. 12 of YŪNUS.)

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لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي
أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمِ الْبُيُوتِ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا تَرَكُ إِلَّا
بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا تَرَكُ أَتَّبِعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا أَنَّا بِآدَمِيِّينَ وَمَا نَرَىٰ
لَكَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكَ كَذِبِيًّا ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ
مِنْ رَبِّي وَآتَيْتُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِي فَعَصَيْتُمْ عَلَيَّ أَنْزَلْتُ مَكُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا
كَرِهُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدٍ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ مَنْ
يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتَهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي
خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي
أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذَا لَسِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالُوا يَنْوُحُ قَدْ جَدَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ
كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ
بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ
يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ
إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَىٰ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ
لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾
وَأَصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ
مُخْرَقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ
قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنِّي فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ

And (such was the state of affairs when) We had sent Noah to his people.²⁹ (He said,) "I warn you plainly not to worship anyone but Allah: otherwise I am afraid that a fearful torment shall visit you one day."³⁰ In answer to this, those chiefs of his people, who had rejected his Message, said, "We see that you are no more than a mere man like ourselves,³¹ and we also see that only the meanest from among us have become your followers without due consideration,³² and we find nothing in you that might give you superiority over us.³³ Nay, we consider you to be liars." He replied, "O my people, just consider it yourselves: If my Lord had sent a clear Sign to me and then bestowed His special blessing on me,³⁴ but you did not see it, how can we compel you to accept that, when you are averse to it? O my people, I do not ask of you any wealth for this work:³⁵ for I look only to Allah for its reward. And I am not going to drive away those who have believed in me. Indeed they are going to meet their Lord,³⁶ (Who knows their worth). But I see that you are adopting the attitude of ignorance. And, O my people, who will help save me from Allah, if I drive them away? Don't you understand this simple thing? And I do not say to you that I possess treasures from Allah: nor do I say that I have the knowledge of the unseen: nor do I claim to be an angel:³⁷ nor can I say about those whom you disdain, 'Allah has not bestowed on them any good'. Allah knows best what is in their minds: for I shall be unjust, if I utter anything like this."

At last those people said, "O Noah, you have already argued with us and argued too much. Now you bring down on us that scourge with which you threaten us, if what you say be true." Noah replied, "Allah will bring down that on you if He will and you have no power to frustrate it. Now, even if I wished to do you some good it cannot profit you even if I wanted to be your well wisher, when Allah has decided that you should go astray:³⁸ He is your Lord and to Him you shall return."

O Muhammad! do they say, "He himself has forged all this?" Say to them, "If I have forged this myself, I shall bear all its consequences, and I am clear of the crime you are committing."³⁹

36-39

And it was revealed to Noah: "No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So do not grieve at their misdeeds, but start to build an Ark under Our supervision in accordance with Our Revelation. And beware that you do not plead with Me for those who had been unjust: indeed now they shall all be drowned."⁴⁰ So he began to build the Ark. And whoso of the chiefs of his people passed by him, he jeered at him. Noah said, "Laugh at us, if you will; we, too, are laughing at you; for soon you shall come to know who is visited by the torment that will disgrace him, and who is afflicted with the inevitable and lasting calamity."⁴¹

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17. This was the one who believed in the open evidence he got from his own self, from the structure of the heavens and the earth, from the system of the Universe that there must be One, and only One Creator, Owner, Providence, Sovereign and Ruler of this world. Then these things which had already been confirmed by his heart, led him naturally to the belief that after this life of the world, there should be another life wherein man should render an account of this life to his Lord and be rewarded or punished according to what one did in this life.

18. That witness was the Qurān which testified to the natural and rational evidence one had received from one's inner self and surroundings.

19. The preceding verses (12-16) dealt with the worshippers of the world who rejected the Message of the Qurān on one pretext or the other. This verse contrasts them with the one who saw the clear evidence of One Allah and of the Hereafter in his own existence and in the whole system of the Universe and found that the same evidence was testified by the Qurān and by the Book of Moses that had been sent before him. That is why such people cannot shut their eyes and minds against the strong evidences they see all around them, and believe in the Message.

Incidentally, this verse makes it clear that before the revelation of the Holy Qurān, the Holy Prophet had gained the knowledge and belief of the "Unseen" like Prophet Abraham (VI : 75-79) by observation and deep contemplation of the phenomena of Nature. Then the Qurān not only confirmed and testified it, but also directly imparted the knowledge of the Reality to him.

20. The false things which unjust people ascribed to Allah were such as these : "There are other partners with Allah in His Godhead, rights and worship. Or He has nothing to do with the guidance or deviation of His servants, and has sent no Messenger, no Prophet and no Book for their guidance but has left people free to adopt any way of life they like. Or God has created mankind for mere fun and will not call them to account

for what they did in this world. Or there is no reward or punishment in the Hereafter.”

21. This will happen in the Next World.

22. This is a parenthetical clause that has been inserted to point out some of the characteristics of the unjust people that make them accursed.

23. That is, “They do not like to follow the Right Way and wish that it should become crooked so as to suit their desires, lusts, prejudices, superstitions and caprices.” (See X : 15)

24. This declaration (vv. 20-23) will be made in the Hereafter.

25. They shall be given double chastisement, because they themselves deviated from the Way and made others deviate from it and left the heritage of deviation for the coming generations. (Please refer to E.N. 30 of AL-A‘ARĀF.)

26. The things they have invented and which proved to be baseless were their theories about God, the Universe and their own life and the confidence, reliance and trust they had imposed in their deities, guardians, interceders and recommenders, and the conjectures they had made about the Life-after-death. All these things turned out to be absolutely false.

27. Here the declaration that began from v. 20 comes to an end.

28. The answer to this question is contained in the question itself. It is obvious that the one who does not see the way, nor listens to the one who is able to show him the way, will most surely stumble over a stone or obstacle and meet with a fearful accident. On the other hand, the one who himself sees the way and makes use of the guidance of the one who knows the way, will most surely reach his destination in perfect safety. This is exactly the difference between those who observe keenly the signs of the Reality in the Universe and listen to the Message of the Prophets appointed by Allah and those who neither observe the Signs of God nor listen to the Messengers. Obviously neither can their behaviours and conducts be alike here nor shall their ultimate ends be equal and the same.

29. E.N.’s 47-50 of AL-A‘ARĀF should be kept in view.

30. This is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of Muhammad (God’s peace be upon him) in vv. 2-3.

31. The same foolish objection was being raised by the people of Makkah against the Holy Prophet. They argued like this : “You are a man like ourselves : you eat and drink, walk and sleep and have a family like us, and there is nothing in you that might show that you have been sent by God.” (See E.N. 11 of XXXVI).

32. The “big” people of Makkah passed the same remarks about those who followed the Holy Prophet. They taunted him with things like these : “Your followers consist of mere inexperienced boys or slaves or the lowest strata of society, in short, of such people as are credulous and lack common-sense and wisdom.” (Please refer to E.N.’s 34-37 of AL-AN‘ĀM and E.N. 75 of YŪNUS).

33. This is to say, "You claim that you are the favoured ones of God Whose blessings are on you, and that those who do not follow your way are under His wrath. But the reverse of this is true for it is we who have been favoured with wealth, servants and power and you possess nothing of the sort. Please point out anything in which you are superior to us."

34. This is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of the Holy Prophet in v. 17. That is, "At first I recognized the reality of *Tauhid* by observing keenly the Signs of God in the universe, and in my own self. Then the same was confirmed by Revelation to me". This shows that all the Prophets acquired the knowledge of the "Unseen" by observation and contemplation. Then Allah blessed them with the actual knowledge of the same at the time of their appointment as Prophets.

35. This was to bring home to them the fact that he had no selfish motive in the performance of his mission, as if to say, "I am conveying the admonition to you without any demand or hope or expectation of worldly gains. Nay, I am bearing all the sufferings in the hope that you may at last realize that I have no axe to grind. And you cannot point out anything to show that I have any personal or selfish interest before me in the mission of the Message". (See E.N. 70 of XXIII, E.N. 17 of XXXVI and E.N. 41 of XLII).

36. That is, "Their true worth will be known only when they shall meet their Lord. Therefore it is not proper for you to treat them with contempt here in this world. Maybe they are precious stones—their Lord alone knows—and you are treating them as mere worthless stones". (See VI : 52, XVIII : 28).

37. This is the answer to their objection that he was no more than a man like themselves. Prophet Noah admitted this : "In fact I am a man and I never claimed to be more than this. My only claim is that God has shown me the Right Way of knowledge and action and you are welcome to test this in any way you like. But instead of this, you are asking me questions about the "Unseen", though I never claimed to have its knowledge. You ask me to produce such things as can be produced only by that person who possesses God's treasures and I never claimed to possess them. You object that my physical life is like that of other men, though I never claimed that I was an angel and not a man. The true test of my claim is that you should ask me about the true creeds, the principles of morality and culture and not about frivolous things about the future events for I never claimed to possess their knowledge."

38. That is, "All my efforts to do good to you cannot prove effective, if Allah has decided to withhold the right way from you because of your obduracy in evil and the lack of interest in good ways. For Allah lets people go astray on the way they choose for themselves."

39. The wording of the verse shows that during the recital of the story of Prophet Noah, the opponents of the Holy Prophet might have felt that he himself had invented that story in order to hit them hard

indirectly. So they might have interrupted him, saying, "You are inventing such stories as these in order to apply these to us and hit us hard indirectly." That is why the narration of the story has been broken to answer their false accusation.

And the fact is that the mean people always behave like his : As they have no interest in goodness, they would turn to the dark side of everything. Even if one gives them wise counsel or teaches them a useful lesson or warns them of an error, they would never benefit from these nor mend their ways. Instead of this, they would search out for that aspect of the matter which will not only undo the wisdom and goodness of the counsel but also bring an accusation against the admonisher. It is obvious that in this way, even the best of counsels can be made void and ineffective, if the hearer dubs that as a "hit," and takes it ill as an affront. Moreover, their thinking is always based on suspicion and mistrust. Supposing there is a certain story which appears to be true. A wise man will take it as a fact and learn a lesson from it, even if it applies exactly to his own condition and points out his error. On the contrary, a suspicious and crooked man will at once jump to the conclusion without any proof at all that the story had been invented for the sole purpose of applying it to him in order to hit him hard.

The same was the condition of those who accused the Holy Prophet that he himself had forged the story and ascribed it to Allah to make it more effective. Allah has asked him to say to them, "If I have forged the story, I shall have to bear its consequences, but this cannot lessen the punishments of the crimes you are committing for which you alone will be held responsible."

40. This verse lays down the limits of the Divine Law of respite. When the Message of a Prophet has been conveyed to a people and is rejected, they are granted respite from punishment only as long as there is the possibility that some of them might accept it. But when there remains no such possibility and there is left nothing but evil element among them, Allah does not grant them any further respite. And this is a manifestation of His mercy, just as for the safety of the good fruit the rotten ones should be thrown away and discarded. Conversely, it shall be an act of cruelty to the good people and the future generations, if pity is shown to those wicked people who are incorrigible.

41. This is a very appropriate example of the points of view of those who look merely at the surface of things and of others who know the reality about them. It appears that when Prophet Noah was building the Ark on the land, it looked to be a ridiculous act to those wicked people who did not believe in him. They jeered at him as if to say, "Just see the madness of the old man ! He wishes to float a ship on the land !" For they could never imagine that after a few days, a ship would actually float there. Therefore naturally they regarded that act of Prophet Noah to

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يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَ
فَارَ التَّنُورَ أَقْلْنَا أَحْمِلُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ
عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ أَمِنَ وَمَا أَمِنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِبَهَا وَمُرسَهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي
مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا
تَكُنْ مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ سَأُوثِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ
الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَجَعَهُ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾
وَقِيلَ يَا رِضْ أَبْلِغِي مَاءَكَ وَيَسَاءَ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَ
اسْتَوَتْ عَلَىٰ الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ
رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَكِيمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ قَالَ
يُنُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ نَدَىٰ فَلَآ تَسْأَلُنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ
بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعْطَكُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي آعُودُ بِكَ أَنْ
أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾
قِيلَ يُنُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِمَّنْ مَعَكَ وَأُمُّهُ
سَمِعَتْهُمْ نَوْمًا يَسْمَعُ مِمَّا عَذَابُ الْيَوْمِ ﴿٦٧﴾ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ
مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾
وَالِىٰ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا قَالَ يُقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ
إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يُقَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَىٰ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ

قرء حفص بفتح
الميم وامالة الراء

١٢

١٢
٣٤٣
حسن والبق ١٢
الوقف على فاصبر
معه نفعه

Thus was it until Our Command came to pass and *Tannūr*⁴² began to boil up. Then We said, "Take into the Ark a pair from every species, and embark your own people—save those who have already been specifically marked⁴³—and also those who have believed;⁴⁴ and those who had believed with Noah were only a few. Noah said, "Embark in the Ark: in the name of Allah will it move and cast anchor. Surely my Lord is very Forgiving and Compassionate."⁴⁵

As the Ark was moving on with them amid waves like mountains, Noah cried out to his son, who was at a distance, "My son! Embark with us and be not with the unbelievers." He answered, "I am going to climb up a mountain that will protect me from waters." Noah said, "Today there is nothing to protect from Allah's judgement except that He Himself should take pity on anyone." In the meantime a wave came between them and he was among the drowned.

It was commanded, "O Earth! Swallow up thy waters, and O Sky, cease thy rain!" Accordingly the waters sank into the Earth. The decree was carried out; and the Ark rested upon Mount Jūdī.⁴⁶ And it was proclaimed: "Gone are the workers of iniquity!"

Noah called out to his Lord, saying, "My Lord! My son is of my family, and Thy promise is surely true⁴⁷ and Thou art the greatest and the best of all rulers."⁴⁸ In answer it was said, "O Noah! He is not of your family; he has turned out to be a worthless act.⁴⁹ So do not ask Me anything of which you have no knowledge. I admonish you that you should not behave like ignorant people."⁵⁰ Noah meekly replied, "My Lord, I seek Thy protection lest I should ask of Thee anything of which I have no knowledge. For if Thou forgivest me not for my presumption, and hast not mercy on me, I shall be totally ruined."⁵¹

It was said, "O Noah, go down:⁵² Peace and blessings from Us are on you and on the communities that are with you. But there are other communities, whom We shall give the provisions of life for some time: then a painful torment from Us shall visit them."

O Muhammad! These are some of the tidings of the "Unseen" which We are revealing to you. You did not know

these before this nor did your people. So practise fortitude, for ultimately, the God-fearing people shall come out successful.⁵³

50-52 And to 'Ād We sent their brother Hūd;⁵⁴ he said, "O my people! Serve Allah: you have no god other than He: it is nothing but falsehood that you have forged.⁵⁵ O brethren! I do not ask of you any recompense for this service: my recompense is with Him who has created me. Do you not then use your common-sense?⁵⁶ And O my people, beg forgiveness of your Lord; then turn to him in repentance, and He will open the gates of the heavens for you and add more strength to your present strength.⁵⁷ Do not turn away as guilty people."

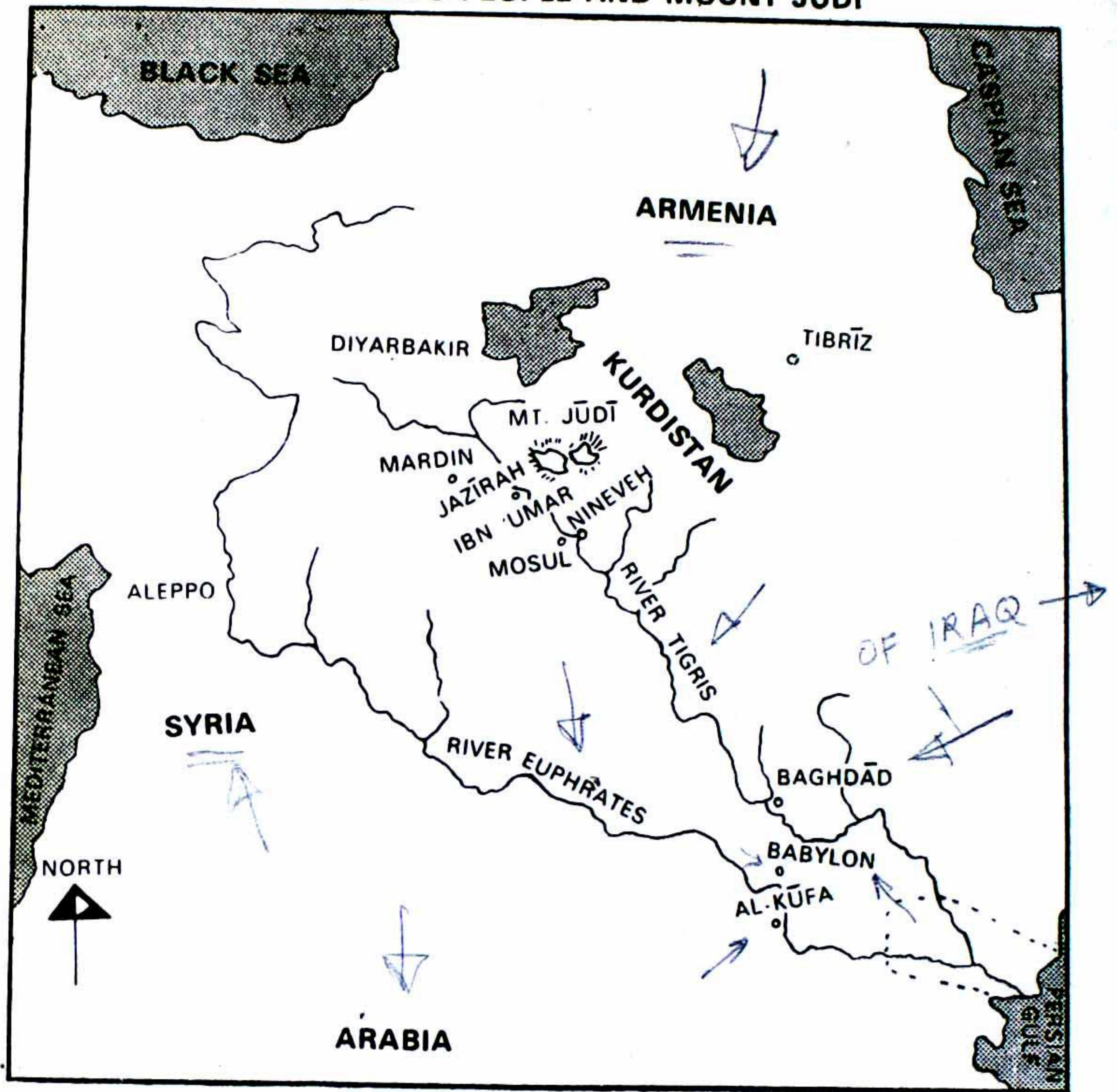
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be a clear proof of his madness. Probably they might be pointing their fingers at him and the Ark he was constructing, saying to one another, "Have you any doubt now, if you had any before, that he is really a mad man, who is constructing a ship to float on the waterless land?" But the one, who had the knowledge of the reality and who knew that a ship would actually be needed there in the near future, was laughing at their ignorance and lack of knowledge of the real matter and their arrogant self-satisfaction, as if to say, "How foolish these people are! The catastrophe is threatening them overhead but they are not only self-satisfied but also regard me mad, who has warned them of it and who is himself making preparations to meet it." And these are exactly the two ways, in general, of judging the wisdom or folly of things. One man judges an act to be wise by looking merely at the surface, while the other goes down deep into it and knows it to be foolish. Likewise the former considers an act to be foolish and mad while the latter who has the real knowledge of the matter, knows that it is based on wisdom and foresight, and is the very same thing that was required under the circumstances.

42. Different interpretations have been given of this, but we are of the opinion that the correct one is the one that is based on the plain words of the Text. The Deluge started from *At-Tannūr*, a particular Oven from under which water began to boil up. At the same time heavy rain began to fall and springs began to gush up water from many places in the earth. This is given in detail in vv. 11-12 of *Sūrah Al-Qamar*: "We opened the gates of the sky from which it began to rain heavily and constantly, and We tore open the earth and springs began to gush forth water from every side: Thus the two kinds of water gathered together to fulfil the destined doom."

In this connection, it should also be noted that the prefix *أل* (*al-*)

LAND OF NOAH'S PEOPLE AND MOUNT JŪDĪ



57-58

(the) before ^اتَنْوُر (tannūr), Oven, shows that a particular oven had been specifically marked by God for the purpose of starting the Deluge. This began to boil up water as soon as it was commanded to do so, and afterwards it began to be called ^االتَّنْوُر ("The Oven"). It has been explicitly stated in v. 7 of XXIII that the said *Tannūr* was specified before hand.

43. That is, "Don't embark in the Ark those who had specifically been marked as unbelievers from your household, for they do not deserve to be shown Our Compassion. Most probably they were two persons. One was his son who was drowned (v. 43), and the other was his wife : (LXVI : 10). And if there were any others, they have not been mentioned in the Qurān.

44. Incidentally, this refutes the theory of the historians and genealogists who trace the genealogy of the whole human race to the three sons of Prophet Noah. This wrong theory became prevalent because of the stories in the Bible that none other than Prophet Noah, his three sons and his wife were rescued from the deluge. (Genesis 6 : 18, 7 : 7, 9, and 9 : 19). But the Qurān contradicts this in many places, saying that besides the people of his own household, some other people of his community, though small in number, were also rescued along with him. Moreover, the Qurān declares that the generations which came after Prophet Noah were his descendants and of all those people who were rescued in the Ark: "You are the descendants of those whom We bore in the Ark with Noah— (XVII : 3) "...they were from the descendants of Adam, and from the seed of those whom we carried in the Ark with Noah...." (XIX : 58).

45. This humility shown by Prophet Noah that his delivery from the Deluge was not due to his own plans, measures and efforts but to the Mercy and Compassion of his Lord, who is most Forgiving, is the true characteristic of a Believer. The Servant of God adopts all necessary measures as a man of the world does, but he does not put his trust in those measures alone. Along with these he puts his trust in his Lord for their success, because he knows well that no measure can be adopted without His sanction, nor can it be put into practice nor can it achieve the required object unless it is helped by the Compassion and Favour of Allah.

46. According to the Qurān, the Ark rested upon Mount Jūdī, which is situated to the North-east of Jazīrah Ibn 'Umar in Kurdistan. But according to the Bible its resting place was Mount Ararat in Armenia, which is one of the ranges of mountains of the same name that extends from Armenia to southern Kurdistan. Mount Jūdī is one of the mountains of the Ararat range, and is known by the same name even today. The ancient histories confirm that the resting place of the Ark was Mount Jūdī. For instance, Berasus, a religious leader of Babylonia, who lived about 250 years before Christ, says in his history of the Chaldeans that

Noah's Ark rested upon Mount Jūdī. Abydenus, a pupil of Aristotle, not only confirms the same but also says that many people of 'Irāq of his time possessed pieces of the Ark, which they ground in water and gave to the sick as a medicine.

Now let us consider the question : Did the Deluge mentioned here cover the whole earth or was it confined to that particular region where Prophet Noah lived? This is a question which has not been finally settled up to this day. As far as the Bible and the Israelite traditions are concerned, this was universal. (Genesis 7 : 18-24). But the Qurān is silent about it, though it does say things which show that the whole human race after the Deluge was the descendant of Prophet Noah and of those with him in the Ark, but this does not mean that the Deluge covered all the earth. It may be explained like this : at that time of the history the only region of the earth, which was inhabited by the human race, was the region in which Noah lived, and the generations which came after the Deluge, gradually spread over other parts of the earth. This theory is supported by two things. First, there is a conclusive proof that a great flood did come over the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates. This is confirmed by historical traditions, archaeological remains and geological evidence. But there are no such proofs in the other parts of the earth as might show that the Deluge was universal. Secondly, traditions have come down to almost all the peoples of the earth living even in distant places like America and Australia, that once a great flood had come all over the earth. The only conclusion which can be drawn from the above is that at one time the forefathers of all the people of the earth lived at one place. But, when afterwards they spread over different lands in the earth, they carried the traditions of the Deluge along with them. (Please refer to E.N. 47 of AL-A'ARĀF).

47. That is, "Thou promised that Thou wilt save the members of my family from this calamity; so save my son for he is also a member of my family."

48. That is, "Thou art the greatest of all rulers : therefore Thy decision is final and there can be no appeal against it." And "Thou art the best of all rulers : therefore all Thy decisions are based on perfect knowledge and absolute justice."

49. Allah has called the wicked son of Prophet Noah "a worthless act", for children are entrusted by the Creator to the care of parents so that they may bring them up and train them to become "good persons" and fulfil the purpose for which He created man. If a father does his very best to "process" and turn the child into a righteous person, but fails in his efforts, the child, who was a sort of raw material in his hands, would be likened to a "worthless act". It is obvious that the wicked son was a "worthless act", for he was not the sort of "good work" which his father had desired him to be. So in this sense he did not belong to the family of Prophet Noah, whom the Creator had sent to mould all his people into "Good acts", especially those who were of his own flesh and blood. Thus

that unrighteous son had forfeited all the rights of blood he had with the Prophet as far as the torment of "the Deluge" was concerned.

Now let us consider the other question : Why was not the request of the Prophet regarding his own flesh and blood granted? The answer is this : If any part of the body of a man becomes so rotten that the surgeon is of the definite opinion that that part must be cut off for the sake of the safety of the rest of the body, the surgeon will not comply with the request of the man not to cut that part of his body, but will say, "It is not a part of your body because it is rotten." This will not, however, mean that it was never actually a part of the body but will imply only this : "As it has ceased to function rightly as a part of the body, it is no more a part of the body in the sense and for the purpose the healthy parts of the body are its parts". Likewise, when it was said to Prophet Noah, "He is not of your family," it did not negate the fact that he was from his loins but implied, "He does not deserve to be treated as a member of your righteous family because of his spoilt morals and conduct. As the torment of the Deluge has been brought about to punish those who had sided with the unbelievers in the conflict of *kufir* and Faith, your son does not deserve to be rescued from it along with the believers. Had it been a conflict between your descendants and those of the unbelievers, the result would have been different, but this being a conflict between the righteous and the unrighteous, the former alone will be delivered from it."

The epithet, "a worthless act", has been purposely applied to the son of Noah, for it is very meaningful. It points to the two different objects that the parents have in view in bringing up their children. Those parents who look merely at the surface of things, bring up and love their children because they are from their loins or their wombs, irrespective of the fact whether they are righteous or unrighteous. But this epithet requires the believers to look upon their children as "pieces of work" entrusted to them in a natural way by their Creator, so that they should prepare and mould them so as to fulfil the object for which Allah has created man. Therefore, if a certain parent fails in his efforts to mould his child in a way to fulfil the very object for which the child was entrusted to him and the latter becomes a servant of Satan instead of his Lord, the parent should regard all his efforts for the child to have gone utterly waste. In that case there is no reason why that parent should have any consideration for that "worthless act".

As a corollary to the above, the same rule will apply to the other relationships of a believer. As a believer is one who believes in certain creeds and behaviours, all his relationships with the other people will be determined by those creeds and behaviours. If his blood relations have the qualities of a believer, their relationship with him becomes doubly stronger. But if they are void of the qualities of a believer, the believer will confine his relationship with them only to the extent of blood relation-

ships and will have no spiritual relationship with them. Consequently, if such a relative comes face to face with the believer in the conflict between *kufr* and the Faith, the believer should fight with him just as he would with any other unbeliever.

50. This warning from his Lord does not mean that Prophet Noah was suffering from the lack of "Faith" or that his Faith had any tinge of weakness or that he had beliefs like those of the ignorant people. His response to this is rather a proof of his high moral character. As Noah was like the other Prophets, a human being, he also suffered from the common human weakness, that is, natural parental love for children. So he begged his Lord to deliver his son from the Deluge. Allah admonished him because the high character of a Prophet demanded that he ought not to have made such a request even for his own flesh and blood. That is why no sooner was the warning administered to him than he realized that he had come down from the high position of a Prophet to the level of a mere father because of the critical psychological human weakness. Therefore immediately after the warning, he repented of his weakness, and behaved as if his own son had not been drowned in the Deluge a moment before this. This character shown by him is a clear proof that he was a true Prophet. He returned to the same height and meekly asked his Lord's forgiveness for showing any concern for his own son who had forsaken the Truth and sided with falsehood.

51. The Qurān has cited the story of the drowning of the son of Prophet Noah to bring home to the people that Allah's decrees are absolutely just and final.

This also served as a warning to the Quraish who considered themselves to be immune from the torment of Allah simply because they were the descendants of Prophet Abraham, and had several gods and goddesses as their interceders. Likewise it was a warning to the Jews and the Christians who cherished, and still cherish, such beliefs, nay, even to those Muslims, who foolishly believe that their saintly ancestors and holy people will guard them against the consequences of the justice of Allah. For the tragic scene depicted here categorically refutes such false expectations and beliefs, saying, "O foolish people ! Why do you cherish such false hopes? When Our Prophet Noah could not save his son who was drowned before his very eyes, and his prayer for the son was not only rejected but he was rebuked for making such a prayer, how can you then expect that anyone much less than a Prophet can deliver you from the justice of Allah?"

52. That is, ".....go down from the Mountain on which the Ark is resting."

53. That is, "You and your companions will come out successful at the end of the conflict just as Prophet Noah and his companions did. For this is the Divine Law that those who exert for the right cause, avoiding erroneous ways for fear of Allah, should come out successful in the end,

even though they should meet with failures in the beginning of the conflict at the hands of the enemies of the truth. Therefore you should patiently bear the afflictions which you are suffering and stand steadfast against the obstacles you are encountering in the way, and you should not be in the least disheartened by the painful and superficial successes of your enemies. If you practise fortitude, you will come out successful in the end like Noah and his companions."

54. Please keep in view E.N.'s 51-56 of AL-A'ARĀF.

55. That is, "You have forged falsehood about all the deities you worship beside Allah, for in fact they possess no powers and no qualities that might entitle them to Godhead. As they have absolutely nothing in them which might make them the objects of worship and service, you have put in them false hopes that they would fulfil your desires and needs."

56. This concise sentence contains a very strong argument: "The fact that you are taking a superficial view of my Message and rejecting it without paying due and deep consideration to it is a clear proof that you are not using your common-sense. Had you tried to understand the matter, you would have found much material for your consideration. You would have noticed that I have absolutely no personal interests : nay, I am suffering hardships in conveying the Message which cannot bring any benefit to me or to the members of my family. This is a conclusive proof that my Faith has very sound bases which are strong enough to enable me to forsake all the worldly joys and comforts and encounter the enmity of the whole world by waging a war against the centuries-old, established rites, customs and ways of life. Do these things not demand a deep and serious consideration? Why don't you then use your common-sense before rejecting the Message out-right?"

57. It is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of the Holy Prophet in v. 3. This is a clear proof that moral values count not only in the life of the Hereafter but also determine the rise and fall of nations in this world. This is because Allah rules over the world in accordance with moral principles and not on the basis of His physical laws alone. That is why Allah has declared in many places in the Qur'an that the fate of a community hangs on the Message which He sends to it through His Prophet. If it accepts the Message, He opens the gates of His favours and blessings for it, but if it rejects the Message, then it is destroyed.

In short, this verse is an article of the moral Law in accordance with which Allah deals with man. Conversely, the other article of the same principle of the Law is that the community which, deluded by its worldly prosperity, begins to tread the paths of sin and iniquity is ultimately destroyed. But if, during its headlong race towards its doom, it realizes its erroneous behaviour and gives up its disobedience and turns in repentance towards Allah, its evil fate is changed and the impending scourge is averted and it is given a further term of respite along with blessings and favours.

مَدَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَكَّلُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالُوا يَهُودُ مَا
 جِئْنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾
 إِنَّ نَقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ وَاشْهَدُوا أَنِّي
 بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ مِنْ دُونِهِ فِكَيْدُوْنِي جَبِيحًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنظِرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ إِنِّي
 تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ ۗ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ آخِذَةٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنْ رَبِّي
 عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَ
 يَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تَتَضَرَّوْنَهُ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنْ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 حَفِيظٌ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَ
 نَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ جَحَدُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا
 رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَاتَّبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ
 الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ إِلَّا إِنْ عَادَا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ ۗ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِعَادِ قَوْمِ هُودٍ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَ إِلَى شَمُودَ ۗ
 أَخَاهُمْ ضَلِحًا ۗ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۗ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُمْ مِنْ
 الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ ۗ إِنْ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ ﴿٦٥﴾
 قَالُوا يٰضَلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا
 وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكِّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى
 بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَآتَيْنِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ ۗ فَمَا
 تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَ يَقَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ
 فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ
 تَسْمَعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعَدُّ غَيْرِ مَكْدُوبٍ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا

They answered, "O Hūd! You have not brought us any clear evidence,⁵⁸ and we are not going to give up our gods at your word, nor are we going to believe in you. We rather believe that some of our gods have smitten you with some evil."⁵⁹ Hūd replied, "I bring Allah's evidence.⁶⁰ And you should bear witness to it that I have nothing to do with the gods you have set up beside Allah in His Godhead.⁶¹ So all of you may do whatever you can against me and give me no respite;⁶² I have full trust in Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord as well. There is no living creature which He does not hold by its forelock. Indeed, straight is the way of my Lord!⁶³ You may turn away, if you will; now that I have conveyed to you the Message with which I was sent to you, my Lord will raise up some other community in your place, and you shall not be able to do Him any harm whatsoever.⁶⁴ Indeed my Lord keeps watch over everything."

And when Our Command came, We delivered through Our Mercy Hūd and those who had believed with him, and rescued them from a woeful scourge. 58

These are 'Ād! They rejected the Revelations of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers⁶⁵ and followed every tyrannous enemy of the Truth; so they became accursed in this world and in the Next World as well. Listen! 'Ād disbelieved in their Lord! Listen! Cast away were 'Ād, the people of Hūd! 59-60

And to Thamūd We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ.⁶⁶ He said, "O my people! worship Allah: you have no other Deity than He. It is He Who has created you from the earth and made it a living place for you.⁶⁷ So ask His forgiveness⁶⁸ and turn to Him in repentance. Most surely my Lord is near at hand and answers prayers."⁶⁹ 61

They replied "O Ṣāliḥ, till now you were such a person among us of whom we had great expectations.⁷⁰ What! do you forbid us to worship gods whom our forefathers worshipped?⁷¹ Indeed we have a strong doubt about the way to which you are calling us, and this has caused a feeling of distraction in us."⁷² 62

Ṣāliḥ said, "O my people! Just consider it yourselves: if my Lord had sent me with a clear Sign, and bestowed His 63-65

special blessings on me, who will help save me from Allah if, after this, I become disobedient to Him? You cannot help me any way, but might hasten my ruin.⁷³ And, O my people, behold: here is Allah's she-camel, a Sign for you. So let her graze at will in Allah's land, and do not touch her with evil intention, lest a scourge should seize you from your Lord in the near future."

But they killed the she-camel. At this Ṣāliḥ warned them, "Well, you have only three more days to enjoy yourselves in your houses. This is a time limit that will not prove false."

58. That is, "You have not brought a clear Sign as evidence to prove conclusively to us that you have been sent by Allah and that the Message you are presenting before us is the Truth."

59. That is, "It appears that you had behaved rudely towards a god or goddess or saint : Consequently you have been smitten with madness and are being abused, dishonoured and pelted with stones in the same streets in which you were respected and honoured before this."

60. This was the refutation of their charge that he had not brought any clear evidence to them. It implied: "You say that I have brought no evidence to prove that I have been sent by Allah Who is a standing witness everywhere in His universe and giving evidence with the phenomena of Nature to show that the truths I have stated before you are absolutely correct. These also prove conclusively that there is no sign of truth in what you falsely ascribe to your gods."

61. This is the answer of Prophet Hūd to their assertion, "We are not going to give up our gods at your word...." (V: 53). His reply implied, "Note it well that I, too, feel a strong disgust at the gods you have set up beside Allah....."

62. This is his answer to their threat : ".....some of our gods have smitten you with some evil....." (compare this with X : 71).

63. That is, "Whatever my Lord does is always right and correct for all His ways are straight and just, and the judgements He passes are based entirely on truth and justice. Therefore you cannot come out successful in your conflict with me : for you have deviated from the Right Way and are committing wicked deeds, while I am on the Right Way."

64. This is his answer to their obdurate denial : ".....nor will we believe in you...."

65. Though only one Messenger had come to them, he had presented the same Message that had been presented by every Messenger in every age to every community. Therefore disobedience to one Messenger has been declared to be disobedience to all the Messengers.

66. Please keep in view E.N.'s 57-62 of AL-A'ARĀF.

67. This is the proof of the claim: "...you have no other Deity than Allah". The argument is based on the fact which the *mushriks* themselves acknowledged that it is Allah Who is their Creator. Therefore Prophet Ṣāliḥ argued like this : "You yourselves acknowledge that it is Allah Who has created your wonderful human body out of the life-less particles of the earth and that it is Allah Who has made the earth a suitable place for you to live. How can then there be any Deity other than Allah Who may be worthy of Godhead, service and worship?"

68. That is, "So ask His forgiveness for the sin you have been committing by worshipping others."

69. In this concise sentence, the Qurān has refuted a grave misunderstanding of the *mushriks*, which has in every age misled people into wrong creeds. They presumed that Allah lived far away from them and, therefore, was unapproachable like their own rulers on the earth. As the only way of approach to them was an intercessor who alone could receive and present their requests and applications to their rulers, and convey their answers to them, they presumed that there should be some intercessor to help approach Allah and bring to them the answers to their prayers. Obviously this is a false presumption, which has been endorsed and encouraged by clever people that Allah is out of the reach of common people and it is not possible for them to reach Him and present their prayers and get their answers. So they should search for such sacred beings as may have an approach to Him. Accordingly, they tried to secure the services of those who were well-versed in the art of conveying the requests with the necessary presents and gifts to the Highest Authority. This misunderstanding created hosts of intercessors, and the establishment of the system of priesthood, which has so incapacitated the followers of *mushrik* creeds of ignorance that they cannot perform by themselves any religious ceremony from birth to death.

Now let us consider the concise answer of Prophet Ṣāliḥ, by which he broke asunder the false presumption of the *mushriks*. It is this : "Allah is near at hand : so you can invoke His help directly without the help of any interceder. He answers prayers : so you can yourselves receive the answer to your prayer. Though He is the Highest, each one of you will find Him so near yourself that you will be able to convey your request even in a whisper, nay, you are permitted to convey your requests openly or secretly to Him. Therefore give up the folly of seeking interceders and setting them up as His partners, and address your prayers to Him Who is near at hand and answers prayers." (Please refer also to E.N. 188 of AL-BAQARAH.)

70. That is, "We had expected that by your wisdom, intelligence, foresight, serious behaviour and dignified personality, you would become a great and prosperous man. So we had looked forward to the great success you would achieve and to the manifold advantages we would gain

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صٰلِحًا وَّالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ
 الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا الصَّيْحَةَ فَاصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دِيَارِهِمْ جِثْمِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾
 ٤٨
 كَانَ لَمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا اِلَّا اِنَّ شَوْدًا كَفَرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَّا بَعْدَ لَشَوْدٍ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاَلْقَدَّ جَاءَتْ
 رُسُلَنَا اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبَشْرٰى قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا قَال سَلٰمٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنْ جَاءَ بِعَجَلٍ حٰنِيْدٍ ﴿٦٩﴾
 فَلَمَّا رَا اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيْهِ نَكَرَهُمْ وَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ
 اِنَّا اُرْسَلْنَا اِلَىٰ قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَاَمْرٰتُهُ قٰاِيْمَةٌ فَضَحِكْتَ فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا بِاسْحٰقَ لَا
 مِنْ وَّرَآءِ اِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوْبَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَتْ يٰوَيْلَتِيْ ءَا لِدُ وَاَنَا عَجُوْزٌ وَّهٰذَا بَعْلِيْ
 شَيْخًا اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوْا اَتَعْجَبِيْنَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ وَ
 بَرَكَتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ اِنَّهٗ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
 الرُّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبَشْرٰى يُجَادِلُنَا فِيْ قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَحٰلِيْمٌ اَوّٰهٌ
 مُّنِيْبٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ يٰاِبْرٰهِيْمُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا اِنَّهٗ قَدْ جَاءَ اَمْرٌ رَبِّكَ وَاِنَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ
 عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُوْدٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَاَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوْطًا سِىِّءَ بِهٖمْ وَضَاقَ بِهٖمْ ذُرْعًا
 وَقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيْبٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهٗ يُهْرَعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوْا
 يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّئٰتِ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ هٰؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِيْ هُنَّ اَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْرَجُوْنَ
 فِيْ ضَيْفِيْ اَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيْدٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالُوْا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتِ مَا لَنَا فِيْ بَنٰتِكَ مِنْ
 حَقٍّ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيْدُ ﴿٧٩﴾ قَالَ لَوْ اَنَّ لِيْ بِكُمْ قُوَّةٌ اَوْ اُوْتِيَ اِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ
 شَدِيْدٍ ﴿٨٠﴾ قَالُوْا يٰلُوْطُ اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَّصِلُوْا اِلَيْكَ فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ
 الْبَيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ اِلَّا اَمْرٰتَكَ اِنَّهٗ مُصِيْبُهَآ مَا اَصَابَهُمْ اِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمْ
 الصُّبْحُ اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيْبٍ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنٰهَا سٰفِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنٰ

So when Our judgement came to pass, We delivered 66-68 through Our mercy Ṣāliḥ and those who had believed with him, and kept them safe from the ignominy of that Day.⁷⁴ Indeed your Lord is All-Mighty and All-Powerful. As regards those who were iniquitous, a dreadful shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes, as if they had never flourished there. Listen! Thamūd disbelieved their Lord: listen! cast away were Thamūd.

And lo, Our Messengers came to Abraham with good 69-73 news. They said, "Peace be upon you." Abraham answered, "Peace be also upon you." And before long he brought a roasted calf for them.⁷⁵ But when he saw that they did not stretch out their hands towards it, he had a mistrust about them and felt a fear of them⁷⁶ in his heart. They said, "Don't have any fear: for we have been sent to the people of Lot."⁷⁷ And his wife was standing by; hearing this, she laughed.⁷⁸ Then We gave her the good news of Isaac, and after Isaac of Jacob.⁷⁹ She said, "Woe is me!⁸⁰ shall I bear a child now when I have grown extremely old, and this husband of mine has also become old?⁸¹ This is indeed a strange thing." The angels said, "What! Are you surprised at Allah's decree?⁸² O people of Abraham's household! Allah's mercy and blessings are upon you. Indeed Allah is worthy of all praise and glory."

So when Abraham's fear was allayed and his heart was 74-76 filled with joy (because of the good news of a child), he began to dispute⁸³ with Us concerning the people of Lot, for Abraham was tender-hearted and merciful and always turned to Us. (At last Our angels said to him), "O Abraham, desist from this now that your Lord's decree has been issued and the scourge which cannot be averted by anyone shall overtake them."⁸⁴

And when Our Messengers came to Lot,⁸⁵ he was greatly 77-80 perturbed and distressed in mind because of their visit and said, "This is a day of woe!"⁸⁶ (No sooner did the visitors come to him than) his people spontaneously rushed towards his house, for they had previously been addicted to wicked deeds. Lot said to them, "O my people, here are my daughters, who are purer for you."⁸⁷ So fear God and don't

degrade me by committing evil to my guests. What! Is there not a single good man among you?" They replied, "You know it well that we have no need of your daughters,⁸⁸ and you also know what we want." Lot cried, "I wish I had the power to set you right or I could find some strong support for refuge."

- 81 Then the angels said, "O Lot, We are messengers sent by your Lord. They shall not be able to do you any harm. So depart from here with the people of your household in the last hours of the night. And look here: none of you should turn round to look behind;⁸⁹ but your wife (who will not accompany you) shall meet with the same doom as they.⁹⁰ The morning has been appointed for their destruction—the morning has almost come."

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over other clans and tribes because of you. But you have brought to nought all of our hopes by adopting the Way based on *Tauḥīd* and the Hereafter which is bound to lead us to utter ruin."

It may be noted here that the people of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) have had the same great expectations of him. They, too, had a very high opinion of his abilities and capabilities before his appointment as a Prophet. For they expected that he would become a great leader, and his foresight would bring innumerable benefits to them also. But when, contrary to their expectations, he began to invite them to the doctrines of *Tauḥīd* and the Hereafter, and preach the principles of high morality, they lost not only all hope in him, but began to entertain and express quite the reverse views. They said, "What a pity! this man who was quite good till now has, under the influence of some charm, not only ruined his own career but has destroyed all of our hopes as well".

71. That was their argument for the worship of their gods. They said that they would worship them because their forefathers worshipped them. Prophet Ṣāliḥ, argued like this: "Worship Allah....Who has created you from the earth, and Who made it a living place for you." In answer to this they argued, as if to say, "These deities are also worthy of worship, and we will not give them up, because our forefathers have been worshipping them since a long time." This is an apt example of the type of arguments employed by the Supporters of Islam and "ignorance". The former base their arguments on sound reasoning, while the latter base them on blind imitation.

72. The Qurān has not specified the nature of the doubts and "feelings of distraction". This is because, though all of them had these feelings, these were different in different persons. For it is one of the characteristics of the Message that it takes away the peace of mind of all these people

to whom it is addressed. Though the feelings of distraction are of various kinds, everyone gets a portion of them. This is because it becomes simply impossible for anyone to continue treading the paths of deviation with that peace of mind which one had before the coming of the Message. For it impels everyone to think whether one is following the Right Way or any of the wrong ways of "ignorance". No one can shut one's ears and eyes against the penetrating and merciless criticism of the weaknesses of the ways of "ignorance", and the strong and rational arguments for the Right Way. Then the high moral character of the Messenger, his perseverance, his nobility, his gentle conduct, his frank and righteous attitude and his dignity cannot fail to make their impressions even on the most obdurate, and prejudiced opponents. The Message by itself attracts the best elements from that society and brings about the most revolutionary changes in the characters of its followers so as to make them models of excellence. Naturally all these things combine to produce the feelings of distraction in the minds of those who desire to uphold the ways of "ignorance" even after the coming of the Truth.

73. This is the answer to the preceding question: "If I disobey Allah by discarding the Guidance I have received from Him in order to please you, you cannot defend me against Him. You will rather add to the intensity of my guilt of disobedience to Him. Thus I shall incur additional punishment from Him for misleading you instead of showing the Right Way for which I had been sent to you."

74. According to the traditions that are current in the Sinai Peninsula, Allah delivered them from the Torment and led them there. There is a Mount near Jabal-i-Mūsa, known by the name of Prophet Şāliḥ where, it is said, the Prophet took refuge after the destruction of his people.

75. This shows that the angels had come to Prophet Abraham in the shape of human beings and had not disclosed their identity. Therefore he took them for strangers and brought a roasted calf for their entertainment.

76. Some commentators are of the view that Prophet Abraham was afraid of them because, from their refusal to eat his meal, he had concluded that they had come to him with some evil intention. For, according to the Arab tradition, if some strangers refused hospitality, it meant that they had not come as guests but as enemies to plunder. But this view is not supported by the succeeding verse.

77. The wording of their answer shows that Prophet Abraham had understood from their refusal to eat that they were angels. But he was afraid of their visit because he knew that the coming of the angels in the human shape did not bode well. So he was fearful that they might have come to take them to task for some offence committed by the people of his household or of his habitation or by himself. Had it been the same thing that the commentators presumed, then their answer should have been, "Don't fear us for we are angels from your Lord." But the answer they gave to remove his fear, "Don't have any fear for we have been sent to the

people of Lot (and not to you)," shows that Abraham knew that they were angels but was troubled in his mind as to the reason of their visit in the human shape. This was because the angels came in human shape when some one was either to be put to a hard trial or punished severely for some offence.

78. It appears from this that the news of the visit of the angels in the human shape had made the people of the house uneasy. So Prophet Abraham's wife had also come there to know what the matter was. She laughed with joy when she learnt that the angels were sent not to punish their people but the people of Lot.

79. The angels told the good news of a son to Ḥaḍrat Sārah instead of Prophet Abraham because he already had a son, Ḥaḍrat Ismā'il, from Ḥaḍrat Hājirah but had no child from her. Therefore to remove her sorrow they told her the good news that a son, Isaac, will be born to her, who will have a son, Jacob, both of whom will be great Messengers of Allah.

80. These words were not used by her in their literal sense as an exclamation of grief and lamentation. She uttered these words merely to express surprise at the news.

81. According to the Bible, Prophet Abraham was 100 years old at the time and Ḥaḍrat Sārah was 90 years.

82. The question was posed to her to remind her, that, though people of old age, do not bear children, it is not beyond Allah's power to bring this about. Therefore a true Believer like her should not show any surprise at the good news, when it is conveyed to her from Allah.

83. "...he began to dispute with Us" is the expression of affection and endearment, which manifests the nature of close relationship of Prophet Abraham with his Lord. This helps depict the picture of the argument that the Servant had with his Lord for pleading the case of the people of Lot. He pleaded persistently, "Lord avert the coming scourge from the people of Lot". The Lord replied, "These people have become so degraded that no good was left in them and their crimes have become so heinous that they deserve no leniency at all." But the Servant still persisted, "Lord, give them more respite, even if a little good yet remains in them; maybe it should bear some fruit." This dispute has been recorded in the Bible rather in detail, but the concise mention in the Qurān is more meaningful. (For comparison please refer to GENESIS 18 : 23-32).

84. A superficial view of this incident from the life of Prophet Abraham in the context it occurs might lead one to consider it to be irrelevant, especially as an introduction to the coming scourge on the people of Lot. But if one reviews this in the light of the object for which these historical events have been related here, one will come to the conclusion that its mention is most apt here. In order to understand its relevancy we should keep in view the following two things :—

(1) These historical events have been related here to warn the Quraish that they were absolutely wrong in their self-delusion that they were quite immune from the scourge with which the Qurān was threatening them because of their relationship with Prophet Abraham and their guardianship of the Ka'abah and their religious, economic and political leadership of Arabia. They thought that Prophet Abraham, whose descendants they were, was a beloved servant of Allah and, would, therefore, intercede for them and defend them against any scourge from Him. That is why the graphic picture of the death of Prophet Noah's son has been drawn to show that the prayer of a great Prophet like him could not save his own son from the scourge. Not only was his prayer rejected but he was also taken to task for making a request for his wicked son. Then this second incident from the life of Prophet Abraham has been related to show that, though Allah was very kind to him, He rejected his appeal for the people of Lot because he had tried to intercede for the wicked people, which was against the requirements of justice.

(2) This incident from the life of Prophet Abraham has been related along with the destruction of the people of Lot for another object as well. The Quraish had forgotten that the Law of Divine Justice had always been operating continuously and regularly and there were open proofs of this all around them. On the one hand, there was the case of Prophet Abraham. He had to leave his home for the sake of the Truth and righteousness and to live in a foreign country where to all appearances, he had no outward power to support him. But Divine Justice rewarded him for his righteousness with a son like Isaac and a grandson like Jacob (Allah's peace be upon them) whose descendants, the Israelites, reigned supreme for centuries over the same Palestine where he had taken refuge as a stranger. On the other hand, there were the people of Lot who were living nearby in great prosperity, which had intoxicated them so much that they lived in open wickedness, totally forgetting that they would be overtaken by retribution from Allah. So much so that they scoffed at the admonition of Prophet Lot. But Divine Justice came into operation at the same time, when it was conveying the good news to Prophet Abraham and decreed that those wicked people should be annihilated from the face of the earth. As a result of this, no vestige of their habitations was left on the surface of the earth. This fact should serve as a lesson to the wicked people for all times.

85. Please keep in view E.N.'s 63-68 of Al-A'ARĀF.

86. From the tenor of the details of the story as given in the different parts of the Qurān, it becomes quite plain that the angels came to Prophet

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عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةٌ مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ ۗ مَّنْضُودٍ ﴿٨٢﴾ مُسَوَّمَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۗ قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا
لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۗ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أُرَاكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّي
أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيطٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ آوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ
وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعَثُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُمْسِدِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ بَقِيَّتُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوا يُشْعِبُ أَسْلُوتَكَ
تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِن نَّفَعَلْ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ
الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ ﴿٨٧﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيْنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقْنِي مِنْهُ
رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَكُمْ عَنْهُ إِن أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ
مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ لَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ
قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ ۗ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِّنكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا
إِلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوا يُشْعِبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَقُولُ وَ
إِنَّا لَنَرُكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا ۗ وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿٩١﴾
قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَهَطِي أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرِيًّا ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُّحِيطٌ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ ۗ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ
مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ۗ وَارْتَقِبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَ
لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جِثْمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ كَانَ لَوْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا إِلَّا بَعْدًا

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النص

Accordingly, when the time of the execution of judgment came, We turned the habitation upside down and rained on it stones of baked clay,⁹¹ and each one of these stones had been specifically marked⁹² by your Lord. And such scourge is not far from the workers of iniquity.⁹³ 82-83

And to the people of Madian, We sent their brother Shu'aib.⁹⁴ He said, "O my people, serve Allah: you have no deity other than He. Do not give short measure and weight. Though I see you now in a state of prosperity, I fear for you the scourge of a day that will encircle you. And, O my people, give full measure and weight justly and do not defraud people of their goods, and do not spread mischief in the land. The residue (after giving full measure) left over by Allah is best for you, if you are believers. Anyhow I am not a guardian over you."⁹⁵ 84-86

They replied, "O Shu'aib! Does your *Ṣalāt* teach you this⁹⁶ that we should give up all those deities whom our forefathers worshipped or that we should have no right on our goods to dispense with them as we please?⁹⁷ Indeed you are the only generous and righteous man (left in the land)!" 87

Shu'aib said, "O my people! Just consider it yourselves if I had a clear evidence from my Lord, and then had been bestowed good provisions⁹⁸ from Him, (how can I, then, be a party to your evil and unlawful practices?") And I do not want at all to commit those evil practices, which I forbid you.⁹⁹ I desire only to reform you as far as it lies in my power. And this work of mine depends entirely on Allah's help: and in Him I have put my trust and to Him I turn for everything. And O my people, let not your obduracy against me be conducive to bring upon you the doom that overtook the peoples of Noah, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ. And the people of Lot are not far from you.¹⁰⁰ Listen! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in penitence. Indeed my Lord is Merciful and loves His Creation."¹⁰¹ 88-90

They answered "O Shu'aib! We do not understand much of what you say.¹⁰² Indeed we see that you are a powerless man among us. Had it not been for your family, we would have stoned you to death long before this, for you are not strong enough to prevail over us."¹⁰³ 91

- 92-93 Shu'aib said, "O my people! Do you regard my family to be more powerful for you than Allah (that you are afraid of it) but have disregarded Him totally? Note it well that whatever you are doing is within Allah's grasp. O my people, you may go on following your way and I will follow my way. You will come to know in the near future who shall be visited by an ignominious scourge and who is the liar; wait if you will and I, too, shall wait with you."
- 94 And when Our decree came to pass, We delivered through Our mercy Shu'aib and those who had believed with him. As regards those who were iniquitous, a dreadful shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes as if they had never flourished in them.
- 95 Listen! Cast away were also the people of Madian as were Thamūd cast away!

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Lot in the shape of handsome boys and that he was unaware that they were angels. That is why he was troubled and distressed in his mind, for he knew how wicked and shameless were his people.

87. By "my daughters" Prophet Lot might have meant either of the two things. He might have referred to the daughters of the community as "my daughters" because the relationship of a Prophet to his people is as of a father's to his children. But it is also possible that he might have meant by this his own daughters. Anyhow this could not have been an offer of adultery, for the succeeding sentence "...these are purer for you" leaves no room for such a misunderstanding. This makes it quite obvious that Prophet Lot admonished them in this way so as to turn them to the females for the lawful gratification of their sexual desires instead of seeking unnatural ways.

88. This answer of the people of Lot shows that they had gone to the lowest depth of depravity and openly and brazen-facedly declared that they did not want females but males. This was the proof that they had not only left the natural way of purity and strayed into the unnatural way of impurity but had also lost all interest in the natural way of gratification. Such a depraved condition is the worst form of moral degradation, for it shows that no good has been left at all. Supposing a person has fallen a victim to an unlawful and sinful behaviour but at the same time considers it to be a wrong behaviour which should be avoided. There is hope for the reform of such a person, and even if he does not mend his way the utmost that can be said about him is that 'he is a depraved person'. On the other hand, if a person gives himself wholly to the unlawful because he has no interest in the lawful, such a filthy person is not worthy of being

considered a man at all, and therefore should be wiped out of the earth. That is why Allah decreed that the people of Lot should be completely annihilated from the face of the earth.

89. This meant to impress on them the urgency of the matter so that they should get out of the doomed place and should not even turn round to look behind to see what was happening there. They were warned lest they should be attracted by the loud noises caused by the explosions and by the wailing of the people and thus lag behind in the territory that had been marked for the scourge and be overtaken by it.

90. The doom of the wife of Prophet Lot is the third incident related in this Sūrah to serve as a lesson that no relationship can deliver a people from the horrible consequences of their sin.

91. Probably the scourge came in the form of a horrible earthquake which turned their habitations upside down and the explosion of a volcano which rained stones on them.

“Stones of baked clay” probably refers to the stones that are formed by the underground heat and lava in the volcanic regions. The signs of such a formation are found even today near the Lot Sea.

92. That is, “Every stone had been specified by Allah to do some particular work of destruction there, and to hit a particular offender”.

93. This was meant to warn the workers of iniquity who were engaged in their evil work, as if to say, “You should not consider yourselves immune from scourge as though it were far from you. If it could visit the people of Lot, it could overpower you as well. Neither the people of Lot were able to defend themselves against Allah, nor can you frustrate Him now.”

94. Please keep in view E.N.’s 69-76 of AL-A‘ARĀF.

95. That is, “I have no power over you. The most I can do for you is to admonish you as a well-wisher, but it rests with you to accept my advice or reject it. As you are accountable to Allah and not to me for your deeds, therefore you should fear Him and desist from your mischievous deeds, if you sincerely believe in Him.”

96. This taunting question was an expression of the feelings of hatred those un-godly people cherished against the religious observances of Prophet Shu‘aib and other God-fearing, pious people. They selected *Ṣalāt* as a target of their taunt because it is the first and foremost outwardly observance of true religion which naturally has always been strongly hated by all un-godly wicked people. This hatred may also be noticed today among those who deliberately intend to follow the wicked ways, for they consider religious observances to be the greatest threat to their evil ways. As they regard *Ṣalāt* to be a symbol of the coming trouble, they begin to taunt the one who observes it. For they know that the victim of the “disease” of religiosity will not rest content with his own reformation but will exert his utmost to reform others as well. They fear that he will preach piety and righteous ways to them and criticise their ungodly and

immoral ways. That is why *Ṣalāt* becomes the target of the taunts of wicked people. And if the person who observes *Ṣalāt* actually begins to preach the observance of virtues and criticise their evil ways just as they had feared, then they condemn it even more vehemently as though it were the cause of the whole trouble.

97. These two things clearly distinguish the theory of the way of "ignorance" from the theory of the way of "Islam". The way of "ignorance" is based on the assumption that one should follow the way of one's forefathers: and for the mere reason that it has been inherited from one's forefathers. Its second assumption is that one's faith and religion are concerned only with worship, and these have nothing to do with the worldly affairs of life, in which one is absolutely free to do as one pleases. On the other hand, the basic theory of Islam is that every way that is not founded on the submission to Allah is wrong, and, therefore, should not be followed, for no other way has got any proof of its truth from reason, knowledge and revelation. Besides, Islam is not confined to the worship of Allah but it covers in its entirety all aspects of life—cultural, social, economic and political. This is because all that man possesses really belongs to Allah and, therefore, man has absolutely no right to do as he pleases with his possessions.

Incidentally, this demand of the people of Prophet Shu'aib that they had every right to do as they pleased with their goods and possessions shows that there is nothing new about the theory of the division of life into separate compartments, religious and mundane. Some three thousand years or so ago they insisted on this division just as Western and Westernised people insist on it today. And they are absolutely wrong to presume that their division is the result of the 'light' that had dawned upon humanity because of the "intellectual progress" that man has made as a result of the evolutionary process. Thus it is clear that it is not light but darkness which prevailed with the same intensity thousands of years ago as it is today and that the conflict of Islam against it is also as old as that.

98. Here رِزْقٌ (*rizq*) implies two things : provision of the knowledge of the Truth and provision of the necessities of life from Allah. In the first sense, it refers to the same thing that has been declared in this Sūrah by Prophets Muhammad, Noah and Ṣāliḥ (Allah's peace be upon them all), that is, "Allah bestowed on me by revelation that knowledge of the Truth, which I already had gained by making keen observations of my own self and of the phenomena of Nature. Therefore I cannot be a party to your evil creeds and unlawful practices." In the second sense, it is the answer to this taunt of theirs: "Indeed you are the only generous and righteous person left in the land !" It meant, so to say, this : "When my Lord has bestowed on me both the knowledge of the Truth and the good and lawful provisions of life, your taunts cannot turn this favour into disfavour. Therefore I cannot be so ungrateful to Him as to declare

your deviations to be the truth and your unlawful practices lawful.”

99. That is, “It is a proof of the truth of my claim that I myself practise what I preach to you. For instance, if I had forbidden you to visit the shrines of gods and goddesses but had myself become the guardian of some such shrine, you would have been justified in bringing this charge against me that I was preaching the Doctrine of *Tauhīd* merely for the sake of ruining the “business” of others in order to make room for my own trade. Likewise, if I had prohibited the use of unlawful means for you but had myself applied the same in my own trade, you would have been justified in charging me with preaching honesty merely for winning good reputation for the prosperity of my own trade. But you yourselves are a witness to this that I myself abstain from those evils which I forbid you to practise and I keep myself pure from those blemishes of which I desire to cleanse you and I follow the way to which I invite you. All this is a clear proof that I believe in the truth of the Message I am conveying to you.”

100. That is, “Your land is not far from the land of the people of Lot, which has been totally destroyed. It is quite near and what happened did not take place long ago.”

101. Prophet Shu‘aib brought the attribute of love of Allah for His creation specially to the notice of his people in order to induce them to give up despair and turn to Allah for forgiveness for their evil deeds, so as to say, “Allah is not hard-hearted and cruel, and cherishes no feelings of enmity towards His creatures. He does not desire to punish them anyhow as if He were to derive pleasure from their torture. As a matter of fact, He inflicts punishment on you only when you transgress all limits and that, too, for the good of mankind. Therefore if you feel ashamed of your sins and repent of these, you will find Him Forbearing, for He loves His creation very much.”

The Holy Prophet has explained the same thing by citing a parable. He said, “Suppose one of you was travelling in a waterless desert and lost his camel on whom he had laden all his provisions for the journey. He made a thorough search for the missing camel, but in vain. Then, in despair of his life, he lay down under a tree. When, lo, the camel with all the provisions intact on it appeared all of a sudden before him. Just imagine his happiness. Allah is more pleased than that man, when a sinful servant returns to Him in penitence.” There is another incident even more effective than this related by Ḥaḍrat ‘Umar : “Once some prisoners of war were brought before the Holy Prophet. One of them was a mother whose infant child had been lost. This had made her so restless and uneasy that she would hold any child she came across close to her breasts and suckle it. When the Holy Prophet saw this, he put this question to the bystanders : ‘Can you imagine that this mother would ever throw her own child into the fire?’ We replied, ‘Never’; not to speak of throwing it into the fire, she would do her utmost in every possible way

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And We sent Moses with Our Signs and a manifest authority of appointment to Pharaoh and the chiefs of his kingdom. But they followed the command of Pharaoh, and unrighteous was Pharaoh's command. On the Day of Resurrection, he will head his people and lead them to Hell.¹⁰⁴ What a wretched goal for one to reach! Curse has fallen on them in this world and shall also fall on them on the Day of Resurrection. What an evil reward for one to receive!

This is the story of some of the habitations We are relating to you : some of these are still standing while the others have been mown down. We were not unjust to them but they were unjust to themselves. And when the judgement of your Lord came to pass, those deities of theirs, whom they worshipped instead of Allah, availed them not at all: they only hastened their ruin. They did them no good but caused their destruction and ruin.

And when your Lord seizes a sinful town, He seizes it like this: indeed His seizure is very terrible and painful. In fact, there is a Sign in this for everyone who dreads the Torment of the Hereafter:¹⁰⁵ that will be the Day when all the people shall gather together and will witness everything that will happen there. We are deferring that only for a fixed term. When that Day will come, no one shall dare speak a word except with Allah's permission.¹⁰⁶ Then some people shall be damned, while others blessed. Those who shall be damned shall go to Hell: here they will pant and hiss (because of thirst). Therein they shall abide for ever as long as the earth and the heavens shall last,¹⁰⁷ unless your Lord ordains otherwise. Indeed your Lord has full powers to do as He will.¹⁰⁸ As for those who shall be blessed, they will go to the Garden and dwell therein for ever as long as the earth and the heavens shall last, unless your Lord wills something else.¹⁰⁹ They will be blessed with a boon that will be imperishable.

So, O Prophet, have no doubt concerning the deities they worship, for they blindly imitate and worship what their forefathers worshipped before them.¹¹⁰ And We will give them the full measure of their share, without detracting anything from it.

Contd. from p. 105]

to prevent it from falling into the fire'." Then the Holy Prophet said, "Allah is much more merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child."

Let us consider the same thing from another point of view. It is Allah Who has created love in the hearts of the mother and the father for their child, and without this parental love, they would never have shown the care and the sacrifice they shower on their child; nay, they would have even become its enemies because of the trouble and inconvenience they have to bear for it. From this it is quite evident that the love of the Creator of this parental affection for His own Creation must be far greater than this parental love.

102. They did not understand what Prophet Shu'aib said to them not because he talked to them in some foreign language or because the theme was too difficult or complicated for them, for he talked to them in their own language and his theme was simple and clear. As a matter of fact, they did not understand because they would not. Their crooked thinking left neither any desire nor any aptitude for understanding his talk. And this is true of all those people who become such slaves of their prejudices and lusts as render them incapable of accepting anything against their preconceived notions. For they are neither inclined to listen to such things nor understand them as though these things were not for them nor were they for them.

103. While studying this part of the story of Prophet Shu'aib, it should be kept in view that similar conditions were prevalent at Makkah at the time of the revelation of this story. The Quraish were as blood thirsty to kill the Holy Prophet as were the people of Madian to take the life of Prophet Shu'aib. Just as the people of Prophet Shu'aib desisted from this evil design because they were afraid of his family, likewise the Quraish were afraid of Bani Hāshim and refrained from executing their evil designs. So this story was being related to warn the Quraish that they should learn a lesson from the answer of Prophet Shu'aib (vv. 92-93), as if to say, "O people of Quraish! This same is the answer to you from Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him)".

104. From this verse and some other narrations of the Qurān it appears that the leaders of a community in this world will be its leaders also on the Day of Resurrection. If they guided and led the people towards virtue, righteousness and truth in this world, their followers will gather together under their banner on the Day of Resurrection and march to the Garden under their leadership. On the other hand, if they called people to some deviation, immorality or unrighteous ways their followers will follow them there also, and march to the fire of Hell under their leadership. The Holy Prophet explained this thing in a Tradition: "On the Day of Resurrection, the banner of the poets of "ignorance" will be in the hands of Imra-ul-Quais, and all of them will march towards Hell under his leadership."

Now let us try to picture the march-past of these two processions. It is obvious that the first procession will march happily and joyously, praying for and praising their leaders whose guidance had led them to this happy state of marching to the blessed Paradise. On the other hand, when the followers of the leaders of errors will find themselves in the miserable plight, to which the leaders had brought them, naturally their anger against them will be beyond description. For the followers will march towards Hell, abusing and cursing their leaders, who had brought them to that horrible state of torture.

105. That is, "In these historical events there is a sign which will show conclusively to the one who considers this deeply that the torment of the Hereafter is inevitable, as warned by the Messengers. One can also judge from this how terrible it will be. This knowledge will fill one with such fear that will keep one on the Straight Way."

Now let us consider the question : How are these historical events a Sign of the Hereafter and the chastisement therein. Everyone who makes a critical study of History with this consideration that it is not merely a collection of events but also a means of drawing logical conclusions, will find that the rise and fall of communities and nations has been taking place in a regular succession. Moreover, one will find that this rise and fall takes place in accordance with some moral laws in an extraordinary way. This is a clear proof that man is subordinate to the Sovereign, Who is ruling over the universe in accordance with some rational moral laws. Accordingly, He raises up those who keep the moral limits above a certain minimum standard set for this purpose and degrades those who fall below it. Then He gives respite to the latter to mend their ways, but if they do not avail of it and continue their downward march and fall below the limit set for their complete degradation, He annihilates them in a way as to serve as a lesson for others. The fact that these events always take place in a regular cycle leaves no shadow of doubt that rewards and punishments are permanent parts of the law of His Kingdom.

A further consideration of the chastisements that were inflicted on different communities shows that, though these punishments fulfilled the demands of justice to some extent, there was still need of more to fulfil all the demands of justice, for these criminals were punished only for those sins which they themselves committed but not for those committed by the succeeding communities, which followed the bad example left by them as their predecessors. It is obvious from the study of history that the law of retribution must take its course and justice demands that they should be punished for the evil legacy they left for others to follow after them. Common-sense and justice demand that life in this world should be reproduced in its entirety in order to fulfil all the demands of the law of retribution. The just Sovereign will, therefore, bring into existence all those people for this purpose and award them due punishments.

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فَتَسَكُمُ النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَأَقِمِ
 الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفِي النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُدْهَبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ۚ ذَلِكَ
 ذِكْرِي لِلذَّكِرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ فَلَوْ لَا كَانَ
 مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّةً يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
 مِّمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أُتْرِفُوا فِيهِ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾
 وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلِهَا مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَكَوْشَاءَ رَبُّكَ
 لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ۚ
 لِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ۚ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ
 أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نَشِئْتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۚ وَ
 جَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّا عَمِلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَانظُرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَ
 لِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ
 عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

We gave the Book to Moses also before this and there 110-115
 arose differences regarding this (just as they are arising
 regarding the Book We have given to you.¹¹¹) If a decree
 had not been made beforehand by your Lord, a judgement
 would have been passed long before this on those who have
 created differences.¹¹² It is a fact that they are in doubt
 and uncertainty about this, and it is also a fact that your
 Lord will give them full measure for their deeds, for He is
 fully aware of what they are doing. So, O Muhammad, you
 and your companions, (who have turned back from unbelief
 and rebellion to Faith and obedience), should stick firmly to
 the Right Way, as you have been enjoined, and should not
 transgress the bounds of submission. Allah is watching over
 what you are doing. Do not incline even in the least towards
 the workers of iniquity lest you should come within the reach
 of the Fire. Then you will find no protector to defend you
 against Allah nor will you get any help from any quarter.
 And listen ! Establish *Ṣalāt* at the two ends of the day and
 in the early part of the night.¹¹³ Indeed virtues remove evils.
 This is a reminder for those who remember Allah.¹¹⁴ And
 practise fortitude, for Allah does not let go waste the reward
 of those who do good.

Then, why were there not among the communities before 116-119
 you such righteous persons who should have forbidden the
 people to make mischief in the land? If there were any,
 they were very few whom We saved from among those com-
 munities. The wrong-doers, however, pursued their worldly
 pleasures for which they had been abundantly provided, and
 became confirmed criminals. Your Lord is not such a One
 as to destroy the habitations without just cause, the while
 their inhabitants are doing right.¹¹⁵ Your Lord could have
 made mankind one community had He so willed, but now
 they will continue to follow different ways but only those on
 whom Allah has His mercy (escape wrong ways). It will be
 so because He has created them for this (very freedom of
 choice and action).¹¹⁶ And the word of your Lord, that He
 will fill the Hell with *jinn*s and human beings, has been
 fulfilled.

120 And, O Muhammad, We relate the stories of the Messengers to you to strengthen your heart by these. And you have received the knowledge of the reality through these and the Believers have got an admonition and a reminder from them.

121-123 As regards those who do not believe, say to them, "You may go on following your way and We will follow our way. You may wait for its ultimate end, and we, too, will wait for it." Everything that is hidden in the heavens and the earth is in the power of Allah and everything shall return to Him. So, O Prophet, serve Him and put your trust in Him, for your Lord is not unaware of what you are doing.¹¹⁷

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(Please see also E.N. 10 of YŪNUS).

106. This is to warn these foolish people who depend on the promises of their intercessors that they would protect them from the torment of the Day. They have been warned to desist from the evil deeds they are committing in the hope that their intercessors would not rest content till they succeed in obtaining from Allah permits of forgiveness for their sinful followers. This is because they believe them to be the beloved favourites of Allah Who cannot afford to displease them at any cost. Then they have been told that, not to speak of wielding any such influence, they shall not dare utter a word except with His permission. No saint, no angel, howsoever high, is so powerful or influential as to speak a word or make any recommendation in the Court of the Highest Sovereign unless He Himself permits it. Therefore such people, as make offerings to others than Allah will be utterly disillusioned and disappointed on that Day, for they will come to know that they were foolish in relying on their intercessors and committing evil deeds in the world in the hope that they would deliver them from the torment of the Day.

107. In vv. 105-106, the words "the earth and the heavens" might have been used idiomatically to denote the everlasting state of their torment or they might refer to the new earth and the heavens that will be made in the Next World. Any how these cannot be the earth and the heavens in the existing state for two reasons. First, according to the Qurān, they shall be changed on the Day of Resurrection. Secondly, the events that are being related in these verses will happen in the Hereafter.

108. This is to emphasize that there is no power that can deliver them from that everlasting torment. Of course, Allah has full powers to forgive anyone He wills or to make a change in the term of the torment of anyone, for He Himself devises laws for Himself and there is no law higher than His Law so as to limit His powers.

109. That is, "They will not be sent to the Garden nor will dwell there in accordance with any extraneous law which might have forced

Allah to let them dwell therein anyhow. They shall dwell there simply because of His favour. He has full powers to make any changes, if He will, about them.”

110. It does not mean at all that the Holy Prophet had any doubts concerning their deities. Though these words have been addressed to the Holy Prophet, as a matter of fact they are meant for the common people. What they mean is this : “No reasonable person should entertain any presumption that the people who worship the deities must have been convinced of their miraculous powers, otherwise they would not have worshipped them nor offered gifts to them nor invoked their help”. The fact of the matter is that their worship, their offerings and their prayers are not based on any knowledge nor any experience nor any real observation, but are the result of blind imitation of their forefathers. The proof of their falsehood is that the deities could not save them, when Allah’s scourge visited their worshippers who were completely annihilated in spite of them.

111. It means this : “There is nothing new in the different opinions expressed by different people regarding the Qurān. They behaved in the same manner towards the Book that was given to Prophet Moses. Therefore, O Muhammad, do not be disheartened by their rejection of the Qurān, though its teachings are simple and plain.”

112. This is to reassure the Holy Prophet and the believers that they should patiently wait for the consequences of the misbehaviour of the unbelievers towards the Qurān, regarding which they were expressing their doubts in different ways. But this will happen in due course as previously ordained by Allah for Allah does not make haste in passing judgement, though the people demand haste.

113. This was to urge *Ṣalāt* at three times, that is, Morning, Evening and ‘Isha. This shows that this was revealed before *Ṣalāt* had been made obligatory for five times a day during the *M‘irāj*. (For explanation, see E.N. 95 of XVII, E.N. 111 of XX, and E.N. 124 of XXX).

114. This is the remedy for eradicating evil from the world : “Do good deeds and defeat evil with them. The best way of making you virtuous is to establish *Ṣalāt*, which will remind you of Allah over and over again : which will produce those good characteristics in you that shall help you fight successfully against the systematic and united front of evil that has been formed against the Mission of the Truth. This will also enable you to establish practically the system of virtue and reform.” (For explanation see E.N.’s 77-79 of XXIX).

115. In this passage, the real cause of the fall of the communities mentioned in vv. 25-99 has been pointed out in a very instructive manner. In reviewing their history Allah declares that the cause of the downfall of not only these but of all the former communities was this : when Allah bestowed His favours on them they abused these favours and were so intoxicated with their own prosperity that they began to make mischief in the land. By and by their collective conscience became so corrupt

that no righteous persons were left among them to forbid evil, and, if a few were left, their voice was so weak that they could not prevent them from causing mischief. As a result of this, evil became so strong and prevalent among them as to warrant the scourge of Allah. Otherwise Allah bears no enmity against His servants that He should destroy them without any just cause, while they were performing righteous works. This has been mentioned here for impressing the following three things :

First, it is imperative that there should be some persons who should invite the people to virtue and forbid evil. For Allah approves virtue only and tolerates evil for its sake so long as there is any potential good left in them. But when a community has no righteous persons left in it and contains only wicked ones, or even if there be some such righteous persons in it as are so weak that nobody pays any heed to them, and the community as a whole rushes headlong towards moral degradation, then Allah's scourge becomes its inevitable doom.

Second, a community, which tolerates everything and everyone except those few who invite it to righteous deeds seals its own doom and invites its destruction.

Third, it is clear from this passage that the destiny of a community is determined by the influence the righteous people can wield in it. If it contains such a number of good persons as may be able to eradicate evil and mischief and establish virtue and righteousness, a general scourge is withheld from it so as to afford an opportunity to them for carrying on their work of reform. On the other hand, if the number of the righteous persons in it remains too small to carry on the reform work, and the community does not tolerate them at all and does not allow them to perform their reform work, then that community incurs its own destruction, for thus it proves itself to be a worthless community which has no justification for its existence. (For further explanation, see E.N. 34 of LI).

116. This is the answer to the objection raised in the name of ^{تَقْدِيرٌ} (*taqdir*) (destiny) against the principle that has been laid down in the preceding verse for the destruction of the wicked communities. It is this : Why should these communities be punished for lack of a sufficient number of righteous persons in them? Why didn't Allah Himself will to produce that sufficient number of righteous persons in it? Allah has answered this objection, so as to say : "It is not the will of Allah to bind mankind inherently to a fixed course of life as He has bound the vegetable and animal life. Had it been so, there would have been no need of sending the Messengers and the Books for inviting mankind to the Faith. For in that case all human beings would have been born-Muslims and born-Believers and there would have been no unbelief and no disobedience. But it is the will of Allah to grant freedom of choice and action to man so that he may be free to choose and follow any way of life. That is why He has left open both the way to Paradise and the way to Hell for man and given every

individual and every community the opportunity to choose and follow either of the two ways with full freedom and win any of the two abodes as a result of one's own efforts and exertions. It is obvious that this scheme of Allah demands that it should be based on the freedom of choice and the option to adopt Faith or unbelief. This is why Allah does not compel a community to the right way if it itself intends to follow the wrong way, and plans and works for it. Allah's scheme does not interfere with the plans and works of such a community. When it makes deliberate arrangements to mould the wicked, unjust, and sinful people, He does not supply it with righteous persons by birth to set it right. Every community is free to produce good or bad people as it wills. And if a community wills to follow a wrong way as a community, leaving little room for the production and the development of the righteous people in order to raise up the standard of virtue, God does not will to coerce it to follow the righteous way. He will let it follow the way it chooses for itself with its inevitable consequences. On the contrary, Allah shows His mercy to that community which produces a sufficiently large number of such people as accept the invitation to virtue, and leaves room in its collective system for such people to work for its reform and purification. (For further explanation, See E.N. 24 of VI).

117. At the end of the discourse, Allah has warned the champions of *kufr*, and comforted the believers, so as to say, "Allah is closely watching the behaviours of both the parties in the conflict between *kufr* and Islam, and the Sovereign is fully aware of all that is happening in His Kingdom. He is watching and controlling everything with perfect wisdom. He will reward richly the champions of the Truth and will not let go waste their efforts and exertions. And though He is showing tolerance to the champions of *kufr*, and giving them respite, He will take them to task because they are unjustly persecuting the standard bearers of the Truth and are spreading chaos in the land, and exerting their utmost to put obstacles in the way of the work of reform. All these things are in the knowledge of Allah and the evil-doers shall have to bear the consequences of their misdeeds, and the true believers will ultimately come out successful."

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XII

D̄usuf (Joseph)

XII

YŪSUF (JOSEPH) یوسف

INTRODUCTION

When and Why Revealed?

The subject-matter of this Sūrah indicates that it was revealed during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's residence at Makkah, when the Quraish were considering the question of killing or exiling or imprisoning him. At that time some of the unbelievers put this question (probably at the instigation of the Jews) to test him : "Why did the Israelites go to Egypt?" This question was asked because they knew that their story was not known to the Arabs for there was no mention of it whatever in their traditions and the Holy Prophet had never even referred to it before. Therefore they expected that he would not be able to give any satisfactory answer to this question or would first evade it, and afterwards try to enquire about it from some Jew, and thus he would be totally exposed. But, contrary to their expectations, the tables were turned on them, for Allah revealed the whole story of Prophet Joseph then and there, and the Holy Prophet recited it on the spot. This put the Quraish in a very awkward position because it not only foiled their scheme but also administered a warning to them by aptly applying it to their case, as if to say, "As you are behaving towards this Prophet, exactly in the same way the brothers of Prophet Joseph behaved towards him; so you shall meet with the same end."

Objects of Revelation

From the above it is clear that this Sūrah was sent down for two objects:

The first object was to give the proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and that too, the one demanded by the opponents themselves so as to prove

conclusively that his knowledge was not based on mere hearsay, but was gained through Revelation. This aspect has been stated explicitly in its introductory verses and explained plainly in its concluding portion.

The second object was to apply it to the Quraish and warn them that ultimately the conflict between them and the Holy Prophet would end in his victory over them. As they were then persecuting their brother, the Holy Prophet, in the same way the brothers of Prophet Joseph had treated him. The Quraish were told indirectly that they would also fail in their evil designs just as the brothers of Prophet Joseph had failed in his case, even after casting him into the well. This is because none has the power to defeat the Divine will. And just as the brothers of Prophet Joseph had to humble themselves before him, so one day the Quraish shall have to beg forgiveness from their brother whom they were then trying to crush down. This, too, has been made quite plain in v. 7: "Indeed there are signs in this story of Joseph and his brothers for these inquirers from among the Quraish."

The fact is that by applying this story to the conflict, the Qurān had made a bold and clear prophecy, which was fulfilled literally by the events that happened in the succeeding ten years. Hardly two years had passed after its revelation, when the Quraish conspired to kill the Holy Prophet like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, and he had to emigrate from Makkah to Al-Madīnah, where he gained the same kind of power as Prophet Joseph had gained in Egypt. Again, in the end the Quraish had to humble themselves before him just like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, when they humbly requested, "Show mercy to us for Allah rewards richly those who show mercy" (V. 88), and Prophet Joseph generously forgave them, (though he had complete power to wreak vengeance on them,) saying, "... today no penalty shall be inflicted on you. May Allah forgive you: He is the greatest of all those who forgive" (V. 92). The same story of mercy was repeated, when after the conquest of Makkah, the crest-fallen Quraish stood meekly before the Holy Prophet, who had full power to wreak his vengeance on them for each and every cruelty committed by them. But instead, he merely

asked them, "What treatment do you expect from me now?" They replied, "You are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother." At this, he very generously forgave them, saying, "I will give the same answer to your request that Joseph gave to his brothers: '... today, no penalty shall be inflicted on you: you are forgiven'."

Topics of Discussion

Moreover, the Qurān does not relate this story as a mere narrative but uses it, as usual, for the propagation of the Message in the following ways:—

Throughout the narrative the Qurān has made it clear that the Faith of Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (Allah's peace be upon them all) was the same as that of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and they invited the people to the same Message to which Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was inviting them.

Then it places the characters of Prophet Jacob and Prophet Joseph side by side with the characters of the brothers of Joseph, the members of the trade caravan, the court dignitary, Al-'Azīz of Egypt and his wife, the "ladies" of Egypt and the rulers of Egypt and poses a silent question to the reader, as if to say, "Contrast the former characters moulded by Islam on the bedrock of the worship of Allah and accountability in the Hereafter with the latter moulded by *kuf*r and "ignorance" on the worship of the world and disregard of Allah and the Hereafter, and decide for yourselves which of these two patterns you would choose."

The Qurān has used this story to bring forth another truth: whatever Allah wills, He fulfils it anyhow, and man can never defeat His plan with his counter-plans nor prevent it from happening nor change it in any way whatever. Nay, it often so happens that man adopts some measure to fulfil his own design and believes that he has done that very thing which would fulfil his design, but in the end he finds to his dismay that he had done something which was against his own and conducive to the Divine purpose. When the brothers of Prophet Joseph cast him into the well, they believed that they had once for all got rid of the obstacle in

their way, but in fact, they had paved the way for the Divine purpose of making him the ruler of Egypt, before whom they would have to humble themselves in the end. Likewise, the wife of 'Azīz had sent Prophet Joseph to the prison, gloating over the thought that she had wreaked her vengeance on him, but, in fact, she had provided for him the opportunity for becoming the ruler of Egypt and for putting herself to the shame of confessing her own sin publicly.

And these are not the solitary instances which prove the truth that even if the whole world united to bring about the down-fall of the one whom Allah willed to raise high, it could not succeed. Nay, the very "sure and effective" measures that were adopted by the brothers to degrade Joseph were used by Allah for the success of Joseph and for the humiliation and disgrace of his brothers. On the other hand, if Allah willed the fall of one, no measure, howsoever effective, could raise him high: nay, it helped to bring about his fall and the disgrace of those who adopted them.

Moreover, the story contains other lessons for those who intend to follow the way of Allah. The first lesson it teaches is that one should remain within the limits, prescribed by the Divine Law, in one's aims and objects and measures, for success and failure are entirely in the hands of Allah. Therefore if one adopts pure aims and lawful measures but fails, at least one will escape ignominy and disgrace. On the other hand, the one who adopts an impure aim and unlawful measures to achieve it, shall not only inevitably meet with ignominy and disgrace in the Hereafter, but also runs the risk of ignominy and disgrace in this world.

The second lesson it teaches is that those who exert for the cause of truth and righteousness and put their trust in Allah and entrust all their affairs to Him, get consolation and comfort from Him, for this helps them face their opponents with confidence and courage and they do not lose heart, when they encounter the apparently terrifying measures of the powerful enemies. They will persevere in their task without fear and leave the results to Allah.

But the greatest lesson this story teaches is that if the Believer possesses true Islamic character and is endowed with

wisdom, he can conquer a whole country with the strength of his character alone. The marvellous example of Prophet Joseph teaches us that a man of high and pure character comes out successful even under the most adverse circumstances. When Prophet Joseph went to Egypt, he was only a lad of seventeen years, a foreigner, all alone and without any provisions; nay, he had been sold there as a slave. And the horrible condition of the slaves during that period is known to every student of history. Then he was charged with a heinous moral crime and sent to prison for an indefinite term. But throughout this period of affliction, he evinced the highest moral qualities which raised him to the highest rank in the country.

Historical and Geographical Background

The following historical and geographical details will help understand the story:—

Prophet Joseph was a son of Prophet Jacob and a grandson of Prophet Isaac and a great grandson of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon them all). The Bible says (and the allusions in the Qurān also confirm this) that Prophet Jacob had twelve sons from four wives. Prophet Joseph and his younger brother Benjamin were from one wife and the other ten from the other wives. Prophet Jacob had settled at Hebron (Palestine) where his father Prophet Isaac and before him Prophet Abraham lived and owned a piece of land at Shechem as well.

According to the research scholars of the Bible, Prophet Joseph was born in or about 1906 B.C. and the incident with which this story begins happened in or about 1890 B.C. He was seventeen when he saw the dream and was thrown into the well. This well was near Dothan to the north of Shechem according to Biblical and Talmudic traditions, and the caravan, which took him out of the well, was coming from Gilead (Trans-Jordan), and was on its way to Egypt.

At that time Fifteenth Dynasty ruled over Egypt, whose rulers are known in history as the Hyksos kings. They belonged to the Arab race, but had migrated from Palestine and Syria to Egypt in or about 2000 B.C. and taken possession of the country. The Arab historians and the commentators

of the Qurān have given them the name of 'Amālīq (the Amalekites), and this has been corroborated by the recent researches made by the Egyptologists. They were foreign invaders who had got the opportunity of establishing their kingdom because of the internal feuds in the country. That is why there was no prejudice in the way of Prophet Joseph's ascendancy to power and in the subsequent settlement of the Children of Israel in the most fertile region of Egypt. They could gain that power and influence which they did, because they belonged to the same race as the foreign rulers of Egypt.

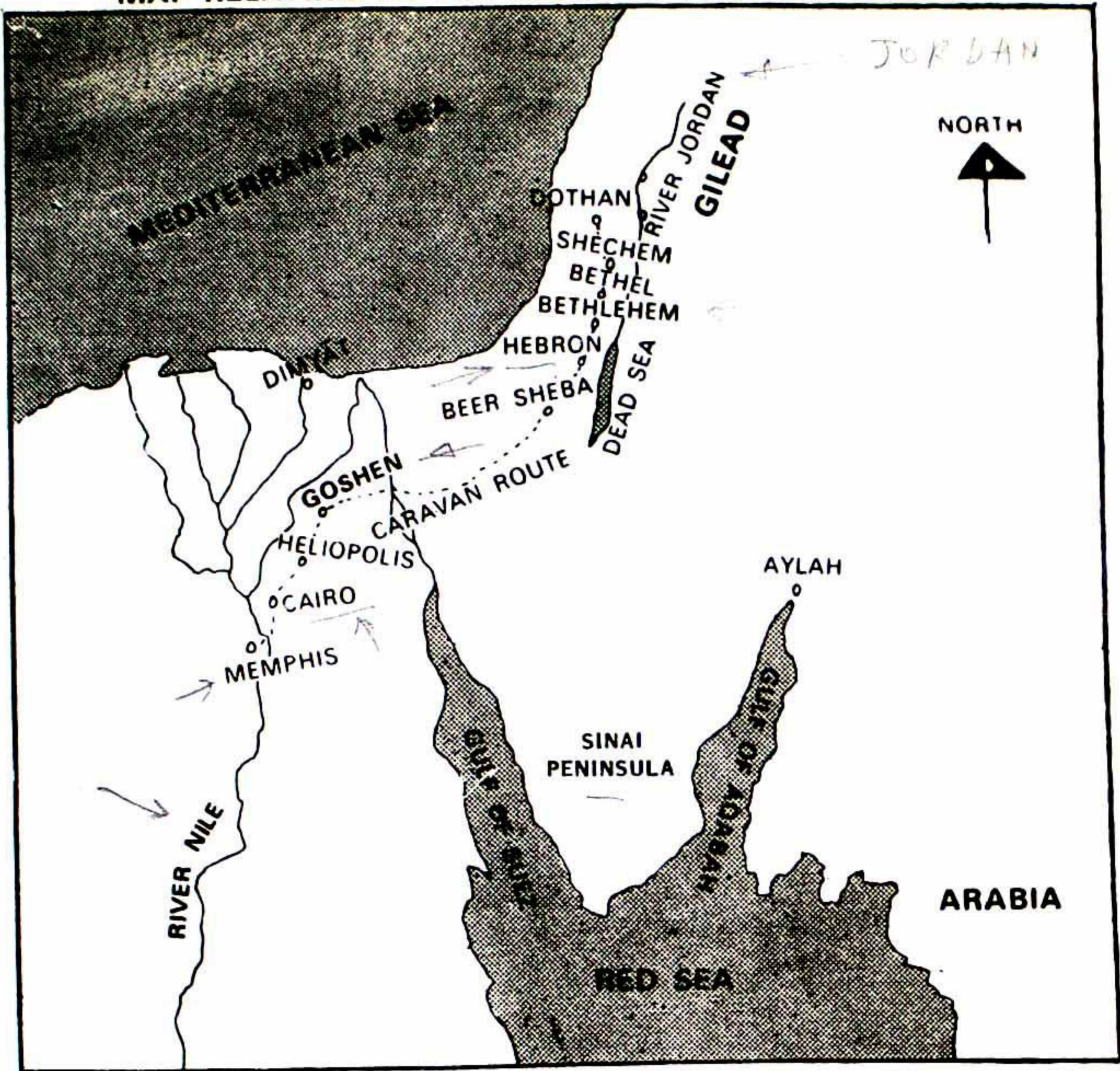
The Hyksos ruled over Egypt up to the end of the fifteenth century B.C., and practically all the powers remained in the hands of the Israelites. The Qurān has made a reference to this in v. 20 of AL-MĀ'IDAH: "... He raised Prophets among you and made you rulers . . ." Then there arose a great nationalist movement which overthrew the power of this dynasty and exiled 250,000 or so of the Amalekites. As a result of this, a very bigoted dynasty of Copts came into power and uprooted everything connected with the Amalekites. Then started that persecution of the Israelites which has been mentioned in connection with the story of Prophet Moses.

We also learn from the history of Egypt that the "Hyksos kings" did not acknowledge the gods of Egypt and, therefore, had imported their own gods from Syria, with a view to spreading their own religion in Egypt. This is the reason why the Qurān has not called the king who was the contemporary of Prophet Joseph by the title of "Pharaoh," because this title was associated with the religion of the original people of Egypt and the Hyksos did not believe in it, but the Bible erroneously calls him "Pharaoh". It appears that the editors of the Bible had the misunderstanding that all the kings of Egypt were "Pharaohs."

The modern research scholars who have made a comparative study of the Bible and the Egyptian history are generally of the opinion that Apophis was the Hyksos king, who was the contemporary of Prophet Joseph.

At that time Memphis was the capital of Egypt, whose ruins are still found on the Nile at a distance of 4 miles south of Cairo. When Prophet Joseph was taken there, he was 17

MAP RELATING TO THE STORY OF PROPHET JOSEPH



1. Dothan is the place where according to the Old Testament, the brothers of Prophet Joseph "cast him into a pit." (Gen. 37:24)
2. Shechem: Here Prophet Jacob had his ancestral piece of land. Now it is called Nablus
3. Hebron is the place where Prophet Jacob lived and is called Al-Khalil also.
4. Memphis was the capital of ancient Egypt, which is now called Minif.
5. GOSHEN is the land where Prophet Joseph settled his father and brothers in Egypt. (Gen. 47:6, 11).

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or 18 years old. He remained in the house of 'Azīz for three years and spent nine years in prison, and then became the ruler of the land at the age of thirty and ruled over Egypt independently for eighty years. In the ninth or tenth year of his rule he sent for his father, Prophet Jacob, to come from Palestine to Egypt with all the members of his family and, according to the Bible, settled them in the land of Goshen, where they lived up to the time of Prophet Moses. The Bible says that before his death, Prophet Joseph bound his kindred by an oath: "when you return from this country to the house of your fore-fathers you must take my bones out of this country with you. So he died a hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him . . ."

Though the story of Prophet Joseph as given in the Qurān differs very much in its details from that given in the Bible and the Talmud, the Three generally agree in regard to its component parts. We shall explain the differences, when and where necessary, in our Explanatory Notes.



الرَّتِّ تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْبَيِّنَاتِ ۚ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١﴾
 نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢﴾ إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ
 عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٣﴾ قَالَ يَبْنَئُ لَكَ تَقْصُصُ

XII

YŪSUF (JOSEPH) ^{يُوسُفُ}

Verses: 111

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

1-3 *Alif Lām Rā.* These are the verses of the Book that makes its object perfectly clear. We have sent it down as Qurān¹ in Arabic so that you (Arabs) may understand it well.² O Muhammad, by revealing this Qurān to you, We narrate to you events and truths in the best manner: though before this you were utterly unaware (of these things).³

4 This is the narrative of that time, when Joseph said to his father, "O father, I have seen in a dream eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw that they were prostrating themselves before me."

1. The Arabic word **قُرْآن** (*Qurān*: "to read") is originally the infinitive form of the verb **قَرَأَ**. When the infinitive form of a verb in Arabic is used as a name, it implies that that thing (or person) possesses the characteristics in their perfection. This Book has been named "Qurān" to indicate that it is meant to be read by all and sundry and is to be read often and over and over again.

2. This does not mean that this Book has been sent down exclusively for the Arabs. What it means is only this: "Of all the people, O Arabs, you should understand the excellences of the Qurān, which are a sure proof of its being Divine Revelation, for it is in your own language and you have no excuse to put forward that it is in a foreign language which you do not understand."

Some people wrongly infer from this verse that this Book had been sent down for the Arabs and not for the non-Arabs; therefore, they assert, it cannot be claimed that it is the Guidance for the whole mankind. But obviously this is a frivolous objection raised by those who do not understand its real significance. It is obvious that a book, though meant for universal guidance, will necessarily have to be put in words in some language so that the people speaking that language should understand its teachings and then become the means of conveying its guidance to other peoples. This is the only natural way of spreading the message of a movement on a universal scale.

3. This was to impress indirectly on the unbelievers of Makkah the fact that the Messenger did not know anything about the story of the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt, but was being informed of this by Revelation from Allah. This introduction was necessary because, as has been stated in the preface to this Sūrah, the disbelievers had put an abrupt question concerning this matter in order to "expose" the Holy Prophet by this test. The answer is to this effect: "Tell them, O Muhammad, that, though you did not know anything about the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt before this, you have now received a Revelation about this from Us."

رِيَاكَ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا ۗ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٥﴾
 وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ
 عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَتْهَا عَلَىٰ أَبِيكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ
 إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِلْسَّائِلِينَ ﴿٧﴾
 إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِمَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ۗ إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي
 ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٨﴾ اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهَ أَبِيكُمْ وَ
 تَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ
 فِي غِيَبِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا
 لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَصِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَرْسَلَهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعِ وَيَلْعَبْ
 وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَنْ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ
 الذِّبَابُ وَانْتُمُ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوا لَئِنْ أَكَلَهُ الذِّبَابُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا
 إِذَا لَخِيرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَاجْتَمَعُوا أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غِيَبِ الْجُبِّ وَأَوْحَيْنَا
 إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَجَاءَ وَآبَاهُمُ عِشَاءً
 يَبْكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ
 الذِّبَابُ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَاءُوا عَلَىٰ قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ تَلَوِّثًا
 كَذِبٍ ۗ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا ۗ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ السُّتَعَانُ
 عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَىٰ دَلْوَهُ ۗ قَالَ
 يَبْشَرِي هَذَا غُلْمٌ ۗ وَأَسْرُوهُ بِضَاعَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَشَرَّوهُ
 بِثَمَنِ بَخِيسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ ۗ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَالَ

In response to this, his father said, "My little son, say 5-6 nothing of this dream to your brothers, lest they should plot any evil scheme against you.⁴ Be on your guard, for Satan is the avowed enemy of man. And it will happen so (as you have seen in your dream) that your Lord will choose you (for His work⁵) and impart you the full understanding of problems,⁶ and will perfect His blessing upon you and upon the children of Jacob as He perfected it on your forefathers—Abraham and Isaac; surely your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.⁷

Indeed there are Signs in this story of Joseph and his 7-18 brothers for these inquirers. This is how the story begins: his brothers (held a consultation and) said to one another, "This Joseph and his brother⁸ are dearer to our father than ourselves, even though we are a band. Truly our father seems to have lost his balance of mind.⁹ Let us, therefore, kill Joseph or throw him somewhere so that your father's attention should be turned exclusively towards you. After this, you should again become righteous people."¹⁰ At this one of them said, "Don't kill Joseph; but if you are bent on doing something, cast him into some dark well. Maybe some caravan passing by will take him out of it." After this consultation, they said to their father, "Father, why is it that you do not trust in us in regard to Joseph, though we are his sincere well-wishers? Send him with us tomorrow that he may freely eat and enjoy sport: we will take good care of him."¹¹ The father replied, "It troubles me that you should take him away with you, for I fear lest a wolf should eat him up, when you are off your guard." They replied, "If a wolf should eat him up in our company, when we are a band, we shall be worthless people indeed!" When, after persisting like this, they took him away with them, and decided to cast him into a dark well, We revealed this to Joseph: "A time will surely come when you will admonish them about this act of theirs; now they do not comprehend its consequences."¹² At nightfall they returned to their father, weeping and wailing, and said, "O father! we were absorbed in running races, and we had left Joseph with our things, when a wolf came and devoured him; but you will

never believe us, even though we were truthful". And (in proof thereof) they had brought his shirt with the false blood upon it. Hearing this, the father said, "No! your evil souls have made this heinous act easy for you. I, however, will bear this patiently with a good grace.¹³ And Allah alone can be asked for help regarding what you are concocting."¹⁴

19-20 A caravan came there; they sent their water carrier and he let down his bucket in the well. (Seeing Joseph in it,) he cried aloud, "Good news! Here is a young lad." So they hid him as merchandise, but Allah knew well what they were doing. Then they sold him for a paltry price,¹⁵ a few *dirhams*. And they did not expect a big price for him.

4. As the meanings of the dream were quite obvious, Prophet Jacob had a genuine fear that Joseph's ten step-brothers would become all the more envious of him when they would hear this : so he warned his righteous son not to mention his dream to his brothers, for he knew that those sons of his did not bear the moral character worthy of the sons of a Prophet, and, therefore, they were up to any evil design against him out of mere envy. As regards the dream, the "sun" in it was Prophet Jacob, the "moon" his wife, (Prophet Joseph's step-mother) and the "eleven stars" his eleven brothers.

5. That is, "Bless him with Prophethood."

6. The Arabic words *تَأْوِيلُ الْأَحَادِيثِ* of the Text do not mean merely "the interpretation of dreams", as has been generally understood. They are comprehensive and imply also this : "Allah will bless you with the full understanding of the problems of life and their solutions and will give you the insight to reach at the reality of every matter."

7. Here it should be noted that the response of Prophet Jacob to the dream of Prophet Joseph, according to the Bible and the Talmud, was quite different from this: "And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (GEN. 37 : 10). Even a little thinking will help one to arrive at the conclusion that his reaction as narrated in the Qurān is worthy of the high character of Prophet Jacob and not the one found in the Bible and the Talmud. For Prophet Joseph had not expressed any personal ambition of his but merely narrated his dream. If the dream was a true one, and it is obvious that Prophet Jacob interpreted it, believing it to be true, there was no reason why he should rebuke his own son, for it meant that it was the will of God and not his own ambition that he should one day rise to a high rank. Can then one expect from any reasonable person, not to mention

a Prophet, that he would take it ill and rebuke the one who dreamed such a dream? And can there ever be such a noble "father" who would say bitter and stinging things to his own son for the "sin" of telling him a true dream, prophesying his future greatness?

8. This brother was Benjamin. He was the real younger brother of Prophet Joseph, and was his junior by many years. Their mother had died at the birth of Benjamin. That is why Prophet Jacob paid special attention to these two motherless children. Besides, Joseph was the only son, in whom he had discerned signs of righteousness and capabilities. Accordingly, when Prophet Joseph narrated his dream to him, he was all the more convinced of his future greatness, and was perturbed at the idea lest his brothers conspired against him out of envy, if they came to know of his dream, which was self-explanatory. For Prophet Jacob knew that his other ten sons were not of the right type, and this was proved by the subsequent events. Therefore, naturally he was not happy with them. It is, however, strange that the Bible gives a different reason for the envy his brothers bore against Prophet Joseph. They were filled with envy against him because "Joseph gave unto his father their evil report."

9. In order to grasp the full significance of the "grievance" the ten sons had against their father for "neglecting" them, we should keep in view the conditions of the clannish life. As there was no established state, each clan led its own independent life side by side with other clans. It is obvious that the power of the head of the clan depended entirely on the number of sons and grand-sons, and brothers and nephews he had to defend the life, honour and property of the family. Therefore, the one leading the clannish life naturally paid more attention to one's own grown up sons, etc., than to children and women of the family. As Prophet Jacob was leading clannish life, these sons of his expected a preferential treatment from him, but the Prophet thought otherwise. So they remarked, "Truly our father seems to have lost his balance of mind; otherwise he could not have neglected us, and loved our two younger brothers more than us, for we are strong young men and can stand him in good stead at the time of need while these youngsters are useless as they themselves stand in need of protection."

10. This sentence depicts the true psychology of those people who give themselves up to the lusts of their hearts, and, at the same time, do not want to break away completely from faith and religion. This is how a person of this type behaves. Whenever he is tempted to do a certain evil thing, he makes up his mind to do it first and puts off the demands of his faith for the time-being. And if his conscience pricks him, he tries to soothe it, saying, "Have a little patience. Let me first do this evil thing, which is an obstacle in my way. Then I will repent and become as good as Thou desirest to see me." As the brothers of Prophet Joseph belonged to this type, they soothed their pricking consciences, saying, "After doing away with Joseph, who is the chief obstacle in our way, we will again become righteous."

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الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ الْكَرِيمِ مَثْوَاهُ عِنْدِي أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ
 نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ
 الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ ۗ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا
 بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَرَأَوْنَاهُ الَّتِي
 هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۗ وَغَلَقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ ۗ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ مَعَاذَ
 اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ ۗ وَ
 هَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ ۗ
 إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ ۗ وَقَدَّتْ قَبِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ
 ۗ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدًا لِدَا الْبَابِ ۗ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَمْلِكِ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ
 يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ هِيَ رَأَوْنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي ۗ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ
 مِنْ أَهْلِهَا ۗ إِنْ كَانَ قَبِيصُهُ قُدًّا مِنْ قَبْلِ فَصَدَقَتْ ۗ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾
 وَإِنْ كَانَ قَبِيصُهُ قُدًّا مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ ۗ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى
 قَبِيصَهُ قُدًّا مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ ۗ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ يُوسُفُ
 أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا ۗ وَاسْتَغْفِرَ لِذَنْبِكِ ۗ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾
 وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۗ قَدْ
 شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۗ إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ
 إِلَيْهِنَّ ۗ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكًا ۗ وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا ۗ وَقَالَتِ
 اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۗ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ ۗ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۗ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا
 هَذَا بَشَرًا ۗ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ ۗ وَ

The person¹⁶ who bought him in Egypt said to his wife,¹⁷ 21
 "Deal kindly with him: maybe he proves useful to us, or we
 may adopt him as our son."¹⁸ Thus We made a way for
 establishing Joseph in the land and arranged to teach him the
 understanding of affairs.¹⁹ Allah does whatever He wills but
 most people do not understand this.

And when he reached his full maturity, We bestowed on 22
 him judgement and knowledge.²⁰ This is how We reward
 the righteous people.

Now the woman in whose house he was began to tempt 23-29
 him, and one day she closed the doors and said, "Come here."
 Joseph replied, "May Allah protect me from this! My Lord
 has given me a good abode: (and should I, then, misbehave
 like this?) Such workers of iniquity never fare well."²¹ She
 advanced towards him, and he also would have advanced
 towards her, had he not perceived his Lord's argument.²²
 This was so that We may remove indecency and immodesty
 from him;²³ indeed he was one of Our chosen servants. At
 last Joseph and she raced towards the door one behind the
 other and she rent his shirt (pulling it) from behind, and they
 met her husband at the door. Seeing him, she cried out,
 "What punishment does the one deserve who shows evil
 intentions towards your wife? What else than this that he
 should be put in prison or tortured with painful torment?"
 Joseph said, "It was she who solicited me." At this a member
 of her own family gave the circumstantial evidence,²⁴ saying,
 "If the shirt of Joseph is rent from the front, the woman
 speaks the truth and he is a liar. And if his shirt is rent from
 the back, she speaks a lie and he is truthful."²⁵ When the
 husband saw that the shirt was rent from the back, he said,
 "This is one of your cunning devices: your devices are very
 cunning indeed! Joseph! leave this matter. And, O woman,
 beg forgiveness for your sin, for you were indeed the wrong-
 doer."^{25a}

The women of the town began to talk about this matter, 30-31
 saying, "The wife of Al-'Azīz has been soliciting her young
 slave, for she has passionately fallen in love with him. We
 think that she is manifestly doing the wrong thing." When
 she heard about their cunning talk, she invited them to

a banquet at her house and got ready pillows for the party²⁶ and placed before each of them a knife. Then, (when they were engaged in cutting fruit) she made a sign to Joseph, as if to say, "Come out before them." When they caught sight of him, they were so amazed that they cut their hands, and exclaimed spontaneously, "Good God! He is no man; he is a noble angel!"

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11. In this thing also the Qurān differs from the Bible and the Talmud, according to which it was not the brothers, who requested their father to send Joseph with them but Prophet Jacob himself sent him with an errand to Shechem, where they were feeding their father's flocks. Obviously the version of the Qurān is more realistic, for Prophet Jacob could never have thought of sending his beloved son with them, because he knew it full well that they were envious of him, and sending him there would have been sending Joseph deliberately into the jaws of death.

12. The Arabic words *وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ* ("they do not understand") may very appropriately mean three things. First, "We were comforting Joseph, and his brothers were quite unaware of this that a Revelation was being sent to him." Second, "You will let them know of this evil act of theirs in such circumstances that they can never even imagine you to be there." Third, "Today they are committing an evil act, but they do not know its future consequences."

There is no mention of this in the Bible and the Talmud that Allah sent a Revelation to comfort Prophet Joseph at that time of his affliction. On the contrary, the Talmud says that when he was thrown into the well, Prophet Joseph wept and cried aloud and implored his brothers for mercy, as if he was no better than any other lad of the desert, who would weep and cry if he were to be thrown into a well. But the picture the Qurān depicts is that of a young man, who is destined to play the part of a great personality in history.

13. The literal meaning of *صَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ* is "good patience" which implies a patience that enables one to endure all kinds of troubles and afflictions in a calm, self-possessed and unrepining manner, without complaining or crying or weeping, as is worthy of great minds.

14. Prophet Jacob's reaction to the news of Joseph's death, as depicted in the Qurān, is also different from that given in the Bible and the Talmud. According to them he was upset by the sad news and behaved like an ordinary father. The Bible says, "And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." (Gen. 37 : 34). And the Talmud says that at the sad news Jacob gave himself up to the abandonment of grief, and lay with his face to the ground. . . . and refused to be comforted, and cried, 'Some wild beast has devoured Joseph and I shall never see him more'; and he mourned for Joseph for many years. (The Talmud, H. Polano, pp. 78, 79).

When we contrast this picture with the one depicted in the Qurān, we clearly see that the Qurānic picture is that of a dignified and great personality. He is not upset in the least at hearing the sad news of his beloved son but at once gets to the bottom of the matter, and tells the envious brothers, "Your tale is false and fabricated." Then he shows "good patience" as a Prophet should and puts his trust in the help of God.

15. Though the matter of the disposal of Prophet Joseph by his brothers was simple, the Bible has made this very complicated. It is obvious that the brothers threw Joseph into the well and went away. Afterwards a caravan came there and pulled him out and carried him to Egypt where they sold him. But the Bible says that the brothers cast him into a pit : then a company of Ishmaelites came there and they agreed to sell him to them. But in the meantime the Midianite merchantmen had drawn and lifted up Joseph and sold him to the Ishmaelites who brought him into Egypt. (Gen. 37 : 25-28). But the authors of the Bible forget this sale transaction and further on in v. 36 say that Prophet Joseph was sold in Egypt by the Midianites and not by the Ishmaelites as stated in v. 28. But the Talmudic version of the matter is a little different from this. It says that the Midianites drew Joseph up from the pit and carried him along with them. As they passed by, the sons of Jacob saw Joseph with them and accused them of stealing their slave. At this a furious quarrel arose and they were ready to enter upon a bloody fray. But a bargain was concluded and the sons of Jacob sold their brother to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver, who afterwards sold him to the Ishmaelites for the same amount. Then the Ishmaelites took him into Egypt and sold him there. Incidentally, it is this Talmudic version that has given rise to the tradition among the Muslims that the brothers of Joseph had sold him. But it should be noted that the Qurān does not confirm this tradition.

16. According to the Bible his name was Potiphar. But the Qurān mentions him merely by the title **الْعَزِيزُ** (Al-'Azīz). As the Qurān uses the same title for Prophet Joseph, when he rose to a high rank, it appears that the person held a high office or rank in Egypt, for the word **عَزِيزٌ** ('Azīz) stands for a powerful person who cannot be opposed and disobeyed. The Bible and the Talmud say that he was an officer of Pharaoh's body guards and captain of the guard. And according to a tradition from Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās, related by Ibn Jarīr, he was the officer of the royal treasury.

17. According to the Talmud the name of his wife was Zelicha and she is known by the same name in the Muslim traditions. As regards the other tradition among the Muslims that Prophet Joseph married her afterwards, it is neither based on the Qurān nor on the history of the Israelites. And the fact is that it is below the dignity of a Prophet to have married such a woman about whom he had personal knowledge that she was of a bad character. And this opinion is confirmed by this general statement of the Qurān : "Women of bad character are for men of bad character and men of bad character are for women of bad character. And the women of pure character are for men of pure character, and the men of pure character for the women of pure character...." (XXIV : 26.)

18. The fact that Potiphar had a very high opinion of Prophet Joseph from the very beginning is also confirmed by the Talmud and the Bible. The Talmud says that at this time Joseph was about eighteen years of age (and) Potiphar was very favourably impressed with his bearing and appearance. So he came to the conclusion that he belonged to some noble family and had been made a slave by the force of adverse circumstances. When the Midianites carried him before Potiphar, he said.... "He does not look like a slave and I fear he has been stolen from his country and his home." That is why Potiphar did not treat him like a slave, but put him in charge of his house and all his possessions. Likewise the Bible says, "And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat." (Gen. 39 : 6).

19. This verse alludes to the special training Prophet Joseph needed at that time for the performance of the duties of the high rank to which he was destined to rise. Up to that time, he had been brought up in the desert, under the environment of a semi-nomadic life of a shepherd. There was neither any settled state in Cana'an and Northern Arabia nor had there been any appreciable progress in culture and civilization, for it was inhabited by different independent clans with no settled government. Thus it is obvious that the training that Prophet Joseph had received in Cana'an, had equipped him with the good characteristics of nomadic life coupled with the qualities of God-worship and high morality of the family of Prophet Abraham. But this was not enough to enable him to direct the affairs of Egypt, which was at that time one of the most cultured and civilized countries of the known world and required a different experience and training for the conduct of its affairs. The All-Powerful Allah made arrangements for this training and sent him to the house of an officer of a very high rank in Egypt, who entrusted him with full powers over his house and estate. This enabled him to develop all those latent abilities that were needed to fulfil his destiny, and he gained the experience that was required for the efficient conduct of the affairs of the kingdom of Egypt in the years to come.

20. By the use of such words as *اٰتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا*, the Qurān usually means, "We bestowed on him Prophethood," for the Arabic word *حُكْمٌ* (*hukmun*) stands for both judgement and "authority" and *عِلْمٌ* (*ilmun*) here stands for that Knowledge which is directly revealed to the Prophets by Allah. Thus, the Arabic words of the Text will mean: "We gave him the power and the authority and the knowledge needed for judging rightly the affairs of the people."

21. Generally the commentators and translators are of the opinion that Prophet Joseph used *رَبِّي* (*Rabbi*: "My Lord") for the master of the house, and what he meant to imply by way of argument was this : "My

Lord has treated me very kindly and kept me well in the house. How can I, then, be so disloyal and ungrateful as to commit adultery with his wife?" I, however, strongly differ with such a translation and commentary.

Though the Arabic usage of رَبِّ (rabb) admits of such a meaning, I have two strong reasons against this here. First, it is far below the dignity of a Prophet to refrain from a sin because of the regard he had for some person other than Allah. Second, there is not a single instance in the Qurān that a Prophet ever called anyone other than Allah his "rabb." Prophet Joseph himself differentiates between his creed and that of the Egyptians making it plain that his رَبِّ ("rabb": Lord) was Allah, while they had made other human beings their "rabb". Then this verse should be considered from another point of view : when رَبِّي ("rabbi") may also mean "My Lord", Prophet Joseph might have invoked Allah. Why should then one take the other meaning, "my master", which most surely implies something that is against the right creed?

22. "His Lord's argument" means inspiration from Allah to rouse his conscience to the fact that it was not worthy of him to yield to the temptation by the woman. As regards the question, "What was that argument", it has been stated in the preceding verse, that is, "My Lord has shown much kindness towards me. Should I, then, misbehave like this? Such workers of iniquity never fare well." This was the "Divine argument" that saved Prophet Joseph in the prime of youth from that great temptation.

The significance of "Joseph also would have advanced towards her, had he not seen his Lord's argument" is this : "Even a Prophet like Joseph (Allah's peace be upon him) could not have been able to save himself from sin, had not Allah guided him rightly with His argument. Incidentally, this verse makes plain the nature of the "Immunity" of Prophets from sin. It does not mean that a Prophet is infallible and incapable of committing any error, offence or sin or doing wrong or making a mistake. What it means is this : though a Prophet possesses passions, emotions, and carnal desires like other human beings, and is capable of committing a sin, he is so virtuous and God-fearing that he never deliberately cherishes any evil intentions, for he is endowed with such great arguments from his Lord as do not allow the lusts of the flesh over-power the voice of his conscience. And if ever he succumbs inadvertently to any of the human weaknesses, Allah at once sends a Revelation to him to set him on the right path. For the consequences of his error do not remain confined to his own person but react on the whole mankind, for even his slightest error might mislead the world to the most horrible sins.

23. "...so that We may remove indecency and immodesty from him" implies two things. First, "It was because of Our grace that he could

perceive Our argument, and save himself from sin, for We willed to remove indecency and immodesty from Our chosen servant." The second meaning is rather deeper : This incident took place in the life of Joseph because this was essential for his spiritual training : "It was Our will to pass him through this hard test so that he should become immune from indecency and immodesty, for he would have to apply all his powers of piety to withstand such a great temptation, and thus become really so strong as not to yield to such things in future as well". The importance and the need of such a hard training becomes quite obvious, if we keep in view the moral conditions of the Egyptian society of that period. We can have a glimpse of this from vv. 30-32. It appears that the women in general and the "ladies" of high society in particular, enjoyed almost the same sexual freedom as is rampant today in the "civilized" West and in the Westernized East. Allah made arrangements for the special training of Prophet Joseph in the house of his master because he had to perform his Divine Mission in a perverted society, and that too as a ruler and not as a common man. It is thus obvious from the behaviour of those "ladies" of high rank, who did not feel any shame nor modesty in openly admiring the beauty of the young slave and from that of the "lady" of the house who was not ashamed of confessing openly that she did her best to tempt him and would continue to do so, that they would have done all they could to allure the young handsome ruler. Thus Allah not only made Prophet Joseph strong enough to resist such temptations in future by passing him through the hard test, but also filled the ladies with despair of gaining any "success" in this matter.

24. It appears that when the master of the house came on the scene, he was accompanied by a person of his wife's household. When he heard the story of the incident, he made this proposal : "As each of them accuses the other and there is no eye-witness of what happened between the two, the matter should be decided by the help of the circumstantial evidence, by examining the condition of Joseph's shirt." Obviously this was a very reasonable way of deciding the matter, and there was, therefore, no need to resort to a miracle. According to some traditions this witness was an infant, lying in the cradle, whom Allah had given the power of speech for giving this evidence. As this story is not supported by any authority, there is no reason why the obvious, plain and reasonable thing should not be accepted that the witness was a wise and experienced member of the family of the wife, instead of having resort to a miracle based on an unauthentic tradition.

25. This is what was implied in the evidence : "If Joseph's shirt is rent from the front, it means that Joseph is the aggressor and she has struggled to defend her honour. But if the shirt is rent from the back, it is obvious that he must have been running away from her and she must have been tugging from behind". The circumstantial evidence implied another thing. As the witness invited the master's attention to Prophet

Joseph's shirt only, it meant that there was no sign at all of violence on the garments of the woman, for had he been the aggressor, there must have been some signs of violence on her garments.

25a. A comparative study of the story as given in the Qurān and in the Bible and the Talmud will be worthwhile.

The Bible says, "And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me : and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice : And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home... And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound." (Gen. 39 : 12-16, 19-20).

The clumsy manner of the above version is obvious. It appears from this that Prophet Joseph's garment was so shaped that the whole of it fell into her hands when she tugged it. Then he ran away all naked, leaving it with her, as if to supply her with a clear proof of his own guilt.

Now let us turn to the Talmud. It says '... hearing the accusation, Potiphar commanded at once that the lad should be whipped severely. Then he carried Joseph before the judges..... They ordered that the rent garment should be brought to them and upon an examination of the same, they pronounced Joseph "not guilty".' (The Talmud Selections, H. Polano, pp. 81-82). Obviously this version is also faulty, for it cannot be imagined that a person of such a high rank would himself take the case to a court that his own slave had tried to assault his wife criminally. Incidentally, this Quranic version of the story is a clear proof of the fact that it has no copied stories from the Israelite traditions as the pseudo-Orientalists allege, but has, on the other hand, corrected them and told the real facts to the world.

26. The ancient Egyptians used to place pillows and cushions in such feasts for the guests to recline. And this is confirmed by the archaeological remains in Egypt.

There is no mention at all of this banquet in the Bible but it has been described in the Talmud in a way quite different from that of the Qurān. Needless to say that while this narrative in the Qurān is natural, life-like and teaches moral lessons, the one in the Talmud lacks all these things.

لَقَدْ رَأَوْهُ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ فَأَسْتَعْصَمَ ۚ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا أَمَرَهُ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَ
 لَيَكُونًا مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۚ وَ
 إِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ ۚ وَأَكُنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ
 رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٨﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ
 مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسُجُنَّتْهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيْنٍ ۗ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا
 إِنِّي آرِسُ نَجْمًا خَيْرًا ۚ وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي آرِسُ نَجْمًا شَرًّا ۚ فَتَىٰ خُبْرًا
 تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبْتُهُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا
 طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلَّا نَبَاتِكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۗ ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ۗ
 إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَ
 اتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۗ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ
 مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ ذَلِكُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا
 يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يَصَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ ۗ أَدْبَابُ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ
 الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٤٣﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءً سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مِمَّا
 أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۗ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۗ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۗ
 ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ يَصَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ ۗ أَمَّا
 أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا ۗ وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُصَلِّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ ۗ
 قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِمَّنَّهَا أَذْكَرُنِي
 عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۗ فَانْسَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذَكَرَ رَبَّهُ فَلَبَّىٰ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضَعِ سِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَ
 قَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ ۗ وَسَبْعٌ سُوسَاتٍ

She said, "Well, this is he concerning whom you blamed me. No doubt, I sought to seduce him and he escaped. Yet if he does not yield to my bidding, he shall be cast into prison, and shall be humbled and disgraced."²⁷ Joseph said, "My Lord! I prefer imprisonment to that to which they invite me. If Thou dost not ward off their cunning devices from me, I may be caught in their snare, and become one of the ignorant."²⁸ His Lord granted his prayer and warded off their guile from him.²⁹ Indeed, He hears everyone and knows everything. 32-34

Then it occurred to them that they should cast him into prison for a time, even though they themselves had seen manifest signs³⁰ (of his innocence and of the guilt of their women). 35

Two³¹ other slaves also entered into the prison along with him.³² One day one of them said, "I have dreamt that I am pressing grapes into wine," and the other said, "I have dreamt that I am carrying loaves of bread on my head, of which birds are eating." Then both of them said, "Tell us their interpretations, for we have seen that you are a righteous man."³³ Joseph replied, "I will tell you their interpretations before the food you get comes to you. This ability of making interpretations is a part of the knowledge that my Lord has bestowed on me. The fact is that I do not follow the ways of those people who do not believe in Allah, and deny the Hereafter. I follow the Way of my forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: it is not for us to associate anyone with Allah as partner. This is Allah's bounty upon us and upon all mankind (that He has not made us the servants of any other than Himself), yet most people are not grateful. O my fellow prisoners, say, which is better: various gods or the One Omnipotent Allah? The gods you worship other than Him are nothing more than mere names you and your forefathers have invented, for Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has commanded that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the right and straight Way, but most people do not know this. My fellow prisoners, here are the interpretations of your dreams. One of you will serve wine to his lord (the king of Egypt): as for the other, he shall be crucified and birds will eat of his head. Thus has that matter been decreed whereof you enquired."³⁴ 36-41

- 42 Then to the one who he thought would be released, Joseph said, "Mention me to your lord (the king of Egypt)". But Satan made him so neglectful that he forgot to mention him to his lord, and so Joseph remained in the prison for several years.³⁵

27. This open demonstration of her love and declaration of her immoral designs show that the moral condition of the higher class of the Egyptian society had declined to the lowest ebb. It is quite obvious that the women whom she had invited must have been ladies belonging to the upper most stratum of the society. The very fact that she presented her beloved before them without any hesitation in order to convince them of his beauty and youth that had urged her to fall in love with him, shows that there was nothing uncommon in this demonstration. Then these ladies did not reproach her but themselves practically demonstrated that, in those circumstances, they themselves would have done the same that she did. Above all, the hostess did not feel that it was immodest to declare openly, "No doubt, I sought to seduce him and he succeeded in escaping from me. Yet I am not going to give him up. If he will not do as I bid him, he shall be cast into prison and humbled and disgraced". Incidentally, this also shows that the modern Western people and their Westernised disciples in the East are not justified in claiming the credit for giving full "freedom" to the woman. For this "progress" is no new thing: it was in vogue in Egypt in its full glory thousands of years before this.

28. In order to grasp the full significance of this prayer of Prophet Joseph, we should try to form a mental picture of the circumstances in which he was placed at that time. In the light of this passage the picture will be something like this. "There is the handsome young man of twenty in the prime of his life, who has brought health and vigour of youth from the desert into Egypt, after passing through the ordeal of forced slavery and exile. Fortune has placed him in the house of one of the highest dignitaries in the capital of the most civilized country of the world at the time. There this handsome young man meets in the prime of life with a strange experience. The lady of the house in which he has to live day and night falls passionately in love with him and begins to tempt and seduce him. Then the fame of his beauty spreads all over the capital and the other ladies of the town also become enamoured of him. Now this is the critical position. He is surrounded on all sides by hundreds of beautiful snares that have been spread to entrap and catch him unawares. All sorts of devices are employed to excite his passions and entice him : wherever he goes he encounters sin lying in ambush with all its charms and allurements and waiting for an opportune moment to make a surprise attack upon him. Such are the circumstances that are tempting him with sin, but the pious young man successfully passes through the ordeal, set for him by Satan, with the self-control that is praise-worthy indeed. But

it is all the more praise-worthy that he does not feel any pride for showing such extraordinary piety in such trying and tempting circumstances. On the other hand, he very humbly invokes his Lord to protect him from those traps of sin, for he is afraid of the common human weaknesses and cries out, "My Lord, I am weak ! I fear lest these temptations should overpower me. I would rather prefer imprisonment to doing such an evil thing into which they are tempting to ensnare me."

In fact, that was the most important and critical period of Prophet Joseph's training, and this hard ordeal helped to bring forth all his latent virtues of which he himself was unaware up to that time. Then he himself realized that Allah had endowed him with the high and extraordinary qualities of honesty, fidelity, piety, charity, righteousness, self-control, balance of mind, and he made full use of these when he gained power in Egypt.

29. Allah warded off their guile from Prophet Joseph by strengthening his character in such a way as to make ineffective all their devices to ensnare him. This also implies that Allah opened the door of prison for him in order to keep him safe from their tricks and temptations.

30. It occurred to them to imprison Prophet Joseph in order "to save face" after they had seen clear proofs of his innocence and of the guilt of their own women, for no other alternative was left, in their opinion, to un-do the scandal that was spreading fast in the land. But it did not occur to them that in fact his imprisonment was his moral victory and the moral defeat of the rulers and the dignitaries of Egypt. By that time, Prophet Joseph had not remained an unknown person, for all and sundry had heard stories of his beauty and piety, and of the love the "ladies" had shown towards him. Therefore when those "wise" courtiers put into practice their plausible device to imprison him in order to reverse the doings of their "ladies", the common people must have drawn their own conclusions for they knew Prophet Joseph to be a man of pure, strong and high character. So it was obvious to them that he had committed no "crime" to merit imprisonment, and that he had been imprisoned because it was an easier way of escape for the chiefs of Egypt than to keep their own ladies under control.

Incidentally, this shows that imprisonment of innocent people without trial and due procedure of law is as old as "civilization" itself. The dishonest rulers of to-day are not much different from the wicked rulers who governed Egypt some four thousand years ago. The only difference between the two is that they did not imprison people in the name and for the cause of "democracy" but they committed unlawful acts without any pretext of law. On the contrary, their modern descendants make use of the specious pretences of honesty when they are acting unjustly. They first enact the necessary unlawful laws to justify their unlawful practices and then "lawfully" imprison their victims. That is to say, the Egyptian rulers were honest in their dishonesty and did not hide the fact that they were

imprisoning people to safeguard their own interests, and not those of the community. But these modern disciples of Satan cast innocent people into prison to ward off the "danger" they feel from them, but proclaim to the world that their victims are a menace to the country and the community. In short, they were mere tyrants but these are shameless liars as well.

31. At the time when Prophet Joseph was sent to prison, probably he was about twenty years old. This has been inferred from two statements in the Qurān and the Talmud. The Qurān (v. 42) says that '....he remained in the prison for a decade or so' and the Talmud says that '....Joseph was thirty years old when he was elevated to his honourable and trustworthy position'.

32. One of the two prisoners, according to the Bible, was the chief of the butlers of the king of Egypt, and the other the chief of the bakers. And according to the Talmud, they were condemned to the prison because during a feast stone grits were found in the bread and a fly in the wine.

33. The fact that two prisoners attested his righteousness shows that Prophet Joseph was held in high esteem in the prison. Otherwise there was no reason why the two should have requested him alone to interpret the dreams and paid their homage like this : "We have seen that you are a righteous man". It clearly means that the events narrated in the preceding verses had reached all and sundry and the people inside the prison and outside it, knew that he had not been guilty of any crime or sin. On the other hand, he had proved himself to be a noble soul who had come out successful in the hardest test of his piety. So much so that there was not the like of him in piety, not even among their own religious leaders in the whole country. That was why not only the prisoners but also the officers and officials of the prison looked upon him as an honourable man and had full confidence in him. The Bible confirms this : "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything *that was* under his hand." (Gen. 39 : 22-23).

34. This discourse, which is the soul of this story, and is one of the best on the doctrine of *Tauhid* in the Qurān itself, finds no place at all in the Bible and the Talmud. This is because they regard him merely as a wise and pious man and not as a Prophet. That is why Rev. Rodwell has, in regard to this passage, accused Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) of putting his own doctrine and conviction into the mouth of Joseph (Allah's peace be upon him). But the Qurān not only puts forward and presents these two aspects of his life in a much better and clearer way but also presents him as a Prophet, who had started propagating the Message even in the prison.

As this discourse suggests several very important things, it will be worthwhile to consider these one by one :—

- (1) This is the first occasion on which Prophet Joseph appears to have begun the preaching of the true Faith. For before this, the Qurān reveals him in the different stages of his life as a man of high morality but does not say anything to show that he conveyed the Message also. From this it is clear that those stages were of a preparatory nature and the mission of Prophet-hood was entrusted to him at the stage of his imprisonment and this was his first discourse as a Prophet.
- (2) Moreover, this was the first occasion when he revealed his identity to others. Before this, we find him bearing patiently everything that happened to him without revealing anything about his relationships with Prophet Abraham and others. He kept silent when the caravan made him a slave and carried him to Egypt : when Al-'Azīz bought him and when he was sent to prison. As Prophet Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Allah's peace be upon them all) were quite well known, he might have used their names to advantage. The members of the caravan, both the Ishmaelites and the Midianites, were closely related to his family, and the Egyptians were, at least, familiar with the name of Prophet Abraham. Nay, the way in which Prophet Joseph mentioned their names in this discourse, shows that the fame of his father, grandfather and great grandfather had reached Egypt. But in spite of this, Prophet Joseph did not use their names on any of the critical occasions to save himself from the plight in which he was placed. This shows that probably he himself knew that these things were inevitable for his training for the Mission for which Allah had chosen him. Now it was absolutely necessary for him, for the sake of his Mission, to reveal this fact in order to show that he was not presenting any new Faith but the same Faith that was preached by Prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Allah's peace be upon them all). This was necessary because the Message demanded that it should not be presented with the claim that it was a new and novel thing but that it was the same universal and eternal Truth that has always been presented by its bearers.
- (3) This teaches us that one can, like Prophet Joseph, carve out a way for the propagation of the Message, if one has the intention and the required wisdom. The two men pay their homage to him and request him to interpret their dreams. In answer to this he says, "I will tell their interpretations but let me first inform you about the source of my knowledge that enables me to understand dreams". Thus he takes advantage of their request and preaches his own Faith to them. We learn from

[Contd. on p. 148

خُضِرَ وَأُخْرِيَسَتْ^{٤٢} يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُءْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ^{٤٣}
 قَالُوا أَصْغَاتُ أَحْلَامٍ^{٤٤} وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ^{٤٥} وَقَالَ الَّذِي
 نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ^{٤٦} يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا
 الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعُ عِجَافٍ^{٤٧} وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ
 خُضِرَ وَأُخْرِيَسَتْ^{٤٨} لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ^{٤٩} قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ
 سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَابَّاءَ^{٥٠} فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ^{٥١}
 ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعُ شِدَادٍ^{٥٢} يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
 تَحْصِنُونَ^{٥٣} ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْرِوُونَ^{٥٤}
 وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اسْتُونِي بِهِ^{٥٥} فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَسْأَلْهُ مَا
 بَالُ النَّسُوءِ الَّتِي قَطَعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ^{٥٦} قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكَ
 إِذْ رَاوَدْتَنِي يُوسُفُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ^{٥٧} قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ^{٥٨}
 قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ النَّحْصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
 الصِّدِّيقِينَ^{٥٩} ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخْنُهِ بِالْغَيْبِ وَإِنِ اللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْخَاطِبِينَ^{٦٠}
وَمَا أَبْرَأُ نَفْسِي^{٦١} إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ^{٦٢} بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي^{٦٣} إِنَّ رَبِّي
 غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ^{٦٤} وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اسْتُونِي بِهِ^{٦٥} اسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي^{٦٦} فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ
 إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ^{٦٧} قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ^{٦٨} إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ
 عَلَيْهِ^{٦٩} وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ^{٧٠} يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ^{٧١} نُصِيبُ
 بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ^{٧٢} وَالْأَجْرُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ^{٧٣} وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةَ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ

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One³⁶ day the king said, "I saw in a dream seven fat 43-44
cows whom seven lean cows were devouring. Likewise I
saw seven green ears of corn, and seven withered ones. O
my courtiers, tell me the interpretation of my dream, if you
understand the meanings of dreams".³⁷ They answered,
"These are the result of confused night-mares and we do not
understand their meaning."

Then one of the two prisoners who had been released 45
remembered the thing after a long time and said, "I will tell
you its interpretation: just send me (to Joseph in the prison.³⁸)"

Going to Joseph, he said, "Joseph, O man of right- 46-49
eousness!³⁹ tell me the meaning of the dream of seven fat
cows whom seven lean cows are devouring, and of seven
green ears of corn and seven withered ones. Maybe I go
back to those people and they might understand it."⁴⁰ Joseph
answered, "You will cultivate land for seven consecutive
years as usual. During this period thrash out of the harvest
you reap only that much grain that might suffice for your
food and leave the rest in the ears. Then, after this, there
shall come upon you seven hard years. Then you will eat up
all that corn you might have kept for that period except that
you will have reserved in the store. After that will come an-
other year in which there will be abundant rainfall in answer to
the prayer of the people and they will press (juice and oil.)"⁴¹

The king said, "Bring him to me." But when the royal 50
envoy came to him, Joseph said,⁴² "Go back to your lord and
ask him to enquire about the matter of the women who
cut their hands. Indeed my Lord has full knowledge of their
cunning."⁴³

The king questioned the women,⁴⁴ saying, "What do you 51
say about the incident when you tried to entice Joseph?"
They all cried out with one voice, "God protect us! we found
no tinge of evil in him." Then the wife of Al-'Azīz also con-
fessed, "Now that the truth has come to light, it was I who
tried to entice him. In fact, he is absolutley in the right."⁴⁵

(Joseph said,⁴⁶) "By this enquiry, I meant to let him 52-53
(Al-'Azīz) know that I did not play him false secretly and that
Allah does not lead to success the machinations of deceivers.
Yet I am not holding my soul to be immune from sin, for the
soul incites to evil, except of the one on whom my Lord
shows mercy. Indeed my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful."

- 54 The king said, "Bring him to me so that I may attach him exclusively to myself."
- 55 When Joseph had a talk with the king, he said, "From now you have an honourable place with us, and you will enjoy our full confidence."⁴⁷ Joseph said, "Please place all the resources of the land under my trust for I know how to guard them and also possess knowledge."^{47a}
- 56-57 Thus did We give power to Joseph in the land: he had every right to take possession of any piece of it that he desired.⁴⁸ We bestow Our bounty upon anyone We will. We do not let go waste the reward of the righteous people; yet the reward of the life in the Hereafter is much better for those who believed and behaved in a God-fearing manner.⁴⁹

Contd. from p. 145]

- this that if a person is imbued with the true and strong desire for propagating the Truth, he can very gracefully turn the direction of the conversation towards the Message he desires to convey. On the contrary, if a person has no strong desire for the propagation of the Message, he never "finds" any opportunity for it, even though hundred and one such opportunities might have come his way which could have been utilized for this purpose. But one must be on one's guard to discriminate between the right use of an opportunity by a wise man from the crude "propagation" of a foolish and un-cultured person, who tries to thrust the Message into the ears of unwilling hearers and succeeds only in creating aversion for it in their minds because of his crude way of presentation.
- (4) This also teaches the right procedure that should be followed in presenting the Message. Prophet Joseph does not present, at the very start, the details of the creed and regulations of the Faith but the most fundamental thing that distinguishes a Believer from a non-Believer, that is, the distinction between *Tauḥīd* and *shirk*. Then he presents it in such a rational manner as cannot fail to convince any man of common sense. And his argument must have impressed deeply on the minds of the two slaves. "Which is better: various gods or One Omnipotent Allah?" They knew it from their personal experience that it was much better to serve one master than a number of them. Therefore it was far better to serve the Lord of the universe than His servants. Moreover, he does not invite them directly to accept his Faith and discard their own faith, but he very wisely draws their attention to this fact: "This is Allah's bounty upon us and upon all mankind that He has not made us the servants of any other than Himself, yet most of the

people are not grateful to Him. Instead of serving Him alone, they invent gods for themselves and worship them". Then it is also noteworthy that his criterion of the faith of his addressees is based on wisdom and has no tinge of bitterness in it. He says, "The gods whom you call 'the god of wealth' or 'the god of health' or 'the god of prosperity' or 'the god of rain' etc. are mere names you have given them without any reality behind them. The real Owner of everything is the Supreme Allah Whom you also acknowledge as the Creator and the Lord of the whole universe. He has sent no authority and given no sanction to anyone for Godhead and worship, but has reserved all the powers, all the rights and all the authorities for Himself, and commanded, 'Serve and worship none but Me.'"

- (5) It may also be inferred from this discourse that Prophet Joseph must have made full use of this "opportunity" of a decade for the propagation of the Message. Some people think that that was the only time when he extended the invitation to the Message. This is wrong for two reasons. First, it is absurd to imagine that a Prophet could have been neglectful of his Mission for a long period. Second, it cannot be imagined that the person who availed himself of the opportunity when two men approached him for the interpretation of their dreams, could ever have passed a decade of imprisonment without propagating the Message entrusted to him by his Lord.

35. Some commentators have interpreted it like this: "Satan made Prophet Joseph neglectful of his Lord, Allah, so he placed his confidence in a man rather than Allah and desired him to mention him to his lord, the king, for his release. So Allah punished him by letting him languish several years in the dungeon". In fact, such an interpretation is absolutely erroneous for as 'Allāmah Ibn Kathīr and some early commentators like Mujāhid, Muhammad-bin-Ishāq and some others say, the pronoun "him" refers to that person who he thought would be released. Therefore it will mean: "Satan made him (the would-be free man) so neglectful that he forgot to mention him (Prophet Joseph) to his lord (the king)." They also cite a tradition in support of their interpretation to this effect. The Holy Prophet said, "If Prophet Joseph had not said that which he said, he would not have remained in imprisonment for several years." But 'Allāmah Ibn Kathīr says, "This *Hadīth* cannot be accepted because all the ways in which it has been reported are weak. Moreover, two of the reporters, Sufyān-bin-Wakī'i and Ibrahīm-bin-Yazīd, are not trustworthy". Besides being weak on technical grounds, it is also against the dictates of common sense: if a wronged person adopted some measures for his release, he cannot be considered to be neglectful of God and guilty of the lack of trust in Allah.

36. Leaving the account of the events of the intervening years of

imprisonment, the story has been resumed from the time when Prophet Joseph began to rise in worldly rank.

37. According to the Bible and the Talmud, the king was greatly troubled and confused in mind because of these dreams. So he proclaimed throughout the whole land of Egypt, and called upon all the wise men, and the sooth-sayers, and magicians of the land to interpret his dreams.

38. The Qurān has told in brief the essence of the request of the chief butler, but the Bible and the Talmud have given its details. According to these (and it stands to reason that it must have been so), he told the king of the life of Prophet Joseph in prison and how he interpreted their dreams rightly and prayed the king to give him leave to see Prophet Joseph in prison for that purpose.

39. The Arabic word **صِدِّيقٌ** (*siddiq*) is used for the one who is an embodiment of truth and righteousness. Thus it shows that the butler had been so deeply impressed with the pure character of Prophet Joseph that even years had failed to blot it from his heart. (For its fuller meaning please refer to E.N. 99 of AN-NISĀ).

40. That is, "They might understand your true worth and realize their own error in keeping you in prison without any just cause. And in a way I may get the opportunity of fulfilling the promise I made with you during my imprisonment."

41. The literal meaning of **يَعَصْرُونَ** is : "they will press." Here it has been used to denote that state of verdure which was going to prevail after the famine years because of rainfall and flood in the Nile. For, when the land will be watered, there will be abundance of seed to press oil, and abundance of fruit to press juice and abundance of fodder for cattle to press milk out of them. It should be noted that Prophet Joseph not only interpreted the king's dream but also told them how to preserve and reserve grain during the first seven years of prosperity for the subsequent seven years of famine. Moreover he foretold the good news of prosperity after the seven years of famine, though there was no hint of this in the dream of the king.

42. There is no mention in the Bible and the Talmud of this most important part of the story that Prophet Joseph declined to quit the prison till his character was cleared. On the other hand, according to the Bible, "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh". And the Talmud depicts even a more degrading picture of the event. It says, "The king ordered that Joseph should be brought before him. But he commanded his officers to be careful not to frighten the lad, lest through fear he should be unable to interpret correctly. And the servant of the king brought Joseph forth from his dungeon, and shaved him and clothed him in new garments, and carried him before the

king. The king was seated upon his throne, and the glare and glitter of the jewels which ornamented the throne dazzled and astonished the eyes of Joseph. Now the throne of the king was reached by seven steps, and it was the custom of Egypt for a prince or noble who held audience with the king, to ascend to the sixth step; but when an inferior or a private citizen of the land was called into his presence, the king descended to the third step and from there spoke with him." (The Talmud, H. Polano, pp. 87-88).

A comparison of the degrading picture in the Talmud with this self-respecting, grand, and noble picture depicted in the Qurān will convince every unbiased critic that the one in the Qurān is worthy of a Prophet of God. Moreover the picture in the Talmud is open to a grave objection: Had Prophet Joseph behaved like a frightened and cringing lad who was so dazzled by the glitter and glare of the jewels of the throne that he bowed to the ground, how was it that the king and the courtiers were so impressed by him that they declared, ".....the Hebrew has proved himself wise and skilful and through his wisdom shall our country be saved the pangs of want"? So much so that the king appointed him, without demur, as "governor" over the land, "second only to himself". All this shows that by that time he had proved his moral and mental superiority and had enhanced it by his refusal to quit the prison without proving his innocence. Otherwise, they would have never raised him to the highest rank in such a civilized and advanced country as Egypt.

43. He demanded an enquiry into the matter not because he himself had any doubt of his innocence, but because he was perfectly confident of this: "My Lord has full knowledge of my innocence and of their cunning. But your lord should also make a thorough inquiry as to why I had been sent to prison, for I do not want to go before the public with any blemish or blot on my reputation. Therefore a public enquiry should be held to prove that I was an innocent victim of the injustice of the chiefs and nobles of the country, who had cast me into prison in order to cover up the guilt of their own ladies."

The words in which the demand was made clearly show that the king was already fully acquainted with the details of the incident that had happened at the banquet of the wife of Al-'Azīz. That is why a mere reference to it was enough.

Another note-worthy thing in this demand was that Prophet Joseph did not in any way hint at the part the wife of Al-'Azīz had played in the event. This is another proof of his noble character that he did not like to involve and entangle the wife of his benefactor in the matter, even though she had done him her worst.

44. As regards the way in which this enquiry was held, it is just possible that the king might have summoned the women to his presence or got their evidence through a trusted officer of his court.

45. The enquiry and the evidences must have helped to pave the way

for Prophet Joseph's rise in the land by concentrating the public attention on him, especially under the circumstances when the enquiry had been demanded by him. He had interpreted the dream of the king, when all the wise men, sooth-sayers and the magicians had failed. Then he had refused to quit prison even though the king himself had ordered that he should be brought before him, and, instead of this, demanded an enquiry of the matter which had been the cause of his imprisonment. Naturally this thing would have filled the people with wonder and they would have been looking eagerly for the result of the enquiry. Thus it can be imagined how the evidences and the result of the enquiry raised his prestige so high that the king and his courtiers declared that he was the only fit person to save the country from the coming calamity. It is no wonder, then, that Prophet Joseph proposed that all the resources of the land should be placed in his hands, and the king accepted this proposal as soon as it was made. For, had it been merely the matter of the interpretation of a dream, the most he would have deserved was some reward and his release from prison. But he could not have said, "Place the resources of the land in my hands" and the king would not have readily acceded to his proposal and given him all the powers in the land, as is contained in vv. 55-56, and confirmed by the Bible and the Talmud.

46. Prophet Joseph might have said these words in the prison when he came to know the result of the enquiry. But some commentators, including great scholars like Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Kathīr, regard this sentence to be a continuation of the preceding speech of the wife of Al-'Azīz. They argue that this sentence has been placed contiguous to her preceding speech without any dividing word between them to indicate that her speech had ended at "he is absolutely in the right", and that the succeeding words were spoken by Prophet Joseph. They construe that if two speeches made by two different persons are placed in contiguity, they must be separated by means of some definite word, or there must be some definite clue to it. As neither of these two things exists in this case, it may rightly be construed that the words contained in v. 52 are the continuation of her preceding speech in v. 51. I, however, am surprised how a great scholar of Ibn Taimiyyah's insight has missed this point that the characteristic of a speech is in itself a clear and self-sufficient clue. Her confession in v. 51 fits in with her low character, but obviously the succeeding dignified and grand speech in v. 52 is too high for her. That fits in only with the noble character of Prophet Joseph. It is obvious that this must have been uttered by one, who was righteous, generous, humble and God-fearing. It is by itself a clear evidence that it could not have come out of the mouth of the one, who said, "Come here", and "What punishment does the one deserve, who shows evil intentions towards your wife?" and ".....if he will not yield to my bidding, he shall be cast into prison." On the other hand, such a pure speech fitted in with the one who said, "May Allah protect me ! My Lord has shown so much kindness towards me. Should

I, then, misbehave like this?" and ".....my Lord! I prefer imprisonment to that to which they invite me. If Thou dost not ward off their cunning devices from me, I might be caught in their snares." Therefore one cannot ascribe such a pure speech to the wife of Al-'Azīz unless there is a clear clue showing that by that time she had repented and believed and mended her ways, but there is no such clue. Thus it is clear that this speech must have been made by Prophet Joseph (Allah's peace be upon him).

47. It implied this : "We have such a high opinion of you that we can safely entrust you with the highest office of responsibility in the country."

47a. As this verse has given rise to some important questions, let us consider these one by one.

The first question is : "Was it an application made by Prophet Joseph to the king for some post?" In the light of the preceding Explanatory Notes, it would have become obvious that it was neither an application nor a request made by an ambitious person who had been on the look-out for an opportune moment for its submission, and no sooner did the king express his approval of him than he presented his request before him. As a matter of fact, this was a sort of proposal, giving his assent to the great desire of the king and the courtiers that he should be appointed as governor over the land. For, according to the Talmud, "the Hebrew has proved himself wise and skilful," and "....surely there can be none more discrete than myself to whom God has made known all these things." The king, his courtiers, his princes, officers, and men of rank, had by that time, come to know and recognize his true worth and had had experience of his moral superiority during the last decade of the vicissitudes of his life. He had proved that there was none equal to him in honesty, righteousness, forbearance, self-discipline, generosity, intelligence and understanding. They knew and believed that he was the only one who knew how to guard and utilize the resources of the land and could be safely entrusted with them. Therefore, as soon as he showed his willingness, they heartily put these in his trust. This is also confirmed by the Bible that the king had formed a very high opinion of Prophet Joseph. He said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" Above all, he said to Prophet Joseph, "There is none so discreet and wise as thou art." (Gen. 41 : 38-39). Accordingly, therefore, the king, of his own accord, set him over his house and land. (Gen. 41 : 41).

Let us now take up the second question : "What was the nature of the powers that were entrusted to Prophet Joseph?" This is important because those who are not well versed in the Qurān have been misled by the words "خَزَائِنُ الْأَرْضِ" in this verse and by his subsequent work of the distribution of grain. They wrongly conclude from these that this post was like the present day posts of a "Treasury Officer" or a "Famine

Commissioner” or a “Finance Minister” etc. etc. In fact, it was none of these, for, according to the Qurān and the Bible and the Talmud, Prophet Joseph had been invested with the full powers and privileges of a ruler. That is why he sat on the throne (V. 100) and they used the title of *malik* (king) for him. (V. 72). He himself was grateful to Allah for bestowing the kingdom on him. (V. 101). Above all, Allah Himself testifies to this fact : “Thus We gave power to Joseph in the land, so he had every right to take possession of any piece of it, if he so desired.” (V. 56). As regards the Bible, it says, “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, ‘Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled : See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt...and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt,’ and called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah (saviour of the world).” (Gen. 41 : 40-45). And according to the Talmud, when his brothers returned to their father, Prophet Jacob, from Egypt, they said about Prophet Joseph, “The king of Egypt is mighty potentate, over his people he is supreme ; upon his word they go out and upon his word they come in; his word governs, and the voice of his master, Pharaoh, is not required.”

Another pertinent question is : What was the object for which Prophet Joseph made a proposal for powers in the land? Did he offer his services for the enforcement of the laws of a non-Muslim state? Or did he intend to establish the cultural, moral and political systems of Islam by taking the powers of government in his own hands? As for its answer let us quote the comments on this verse (55) by ‘Allāmah Zamakhsharī in his “Kash-shāf”. He says, “When Prophet Joseph proposed, ‘Please place all the resources of the country under my trust’, he meant to get an opportunity for enforcing the Commandments of Allah and for establishing truth and justice, and to gain that power which is essential for fulfilling the Mission for which the Messengers are sent. He did not make this demand for the love of kingdom or for worldly desires and ambitions. He did this because he knew full well that there was none else who could perform that work.”

To be frank, the above question leads to very important and basic issues. These are : Was Joseph a Prophet of Allah or not? If he was, does the Qurān put forward such a conception of a Prophet that he himself should (as they allege Prophet Joseph did) offer his services to a system of unbelief to carry on its work on un-Godly principles? Nay, it leads to a more delicate and important question : Was he a righteous person or not? and, if he was, could it ever be expected that he would (according to their interpretation,) practically accept the theory that Sovereignty belongs to the king and not to Allah, whereas in the prison he preached, “Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah (V. 40)?” for if, as they interpret, he submitted an application for service to the king, it meant that he did so against his own principles which he inculcated while in prison : “....which is better : various gods or the One Omnipotent Allah?” As the king of Egypt was

one of the "gods" they had set up, so to offer services to carry on the work of the un-Islamic system under the existing un-Islamic law would have been tantamount to acknowledging the king as his Lord. Are they prepared to place Prophet Joseph in that position?

It is an irony that such Muslims as interpret this verse in this way, lower the character of Prophet Joseph. They have evinced the same mentality that the Jews had developed during the period of their degeneration. When they became morally and mentally depraved, they deliberately began to represent their Prophets and saints as people of low character like themselves in order to justify their own degraded characters and to make room for excuses for going still lower. Likewise, when the Muslims came under the sway of non-Muslim governments, they wanted to serve under them, but the teachings of Islam and the patterns of their worthy forefathers stood in their way and they felt ashamed of this. So, in order to pacify their consciences, they sought refuge in this verse and by its misinterpretation thought that that great Prophet had made an application for a post to serve under a non-Muslim under un-Islamic laws. Whereas the Prophet's own life taught the lesson that even a single Muslim could all by himself bring about the Islamic revolution in a whole country by his pure Islamic character, his Faith, intelligence and wisdom and that a true Believer is able to conquer, by the proper use of his moral character, a whole country without any army, ammunition or material provisions.

48. This is to show that the whole land of Egypt was under his complete control, as if it belonged to him and he could claim any piece of it as his, and there was no piece of it that could be withheld from him. The early commentators have also made the same comment on this verse. For instance, 'Allāmah Ibn Jarīr Tabarī, on the authority of Ibn Zaid, says that this verse means : "We made Joseph the owner of all those things that were in Egypt, and in this part of the world he could do whatever he liked and wherever he liked for he had been given complete authority over this land. So much so that he could bring Pharaoh under his sway and become his master, if he so desired". He has quoted another thing from Mujāhid, who is one of the most learned commentators, to the effect that the king of Egypt had embraced Islam through Prophet Joseph.

49. This is a warning against a misunderstanding that one might have had from the preceding verse that kingdom and power were the real ultimate rewards for virtue and righteousness, for the best reward that a Believer should desire and strive for will be the one that Allah will bestow upon Believers in the Hereafter.

لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَّازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَبِيكُمْ
 أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوْفِي الْكَيْلَ وَ أَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا
 كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالُوا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾
 وَ قَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا
 إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا
 الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا آخَانًا نَكْتَلُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالَ هَلْ أَمِنَكُمُ عَلَيْهِ
 إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حِفْظًا ۖ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾
 وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا بَانَا مَا نَبْغِي ۗ
 هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا ۖ وَ نَبِيرُ أَهْلِنَا وَ نَحْفَظُ آخَانًا وَ نَزِدَادُ كَيْلَ
 بَعِيرٍ ۗ ذَلِكُ كَيْلُ يَسِيرٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنْ
 اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۗ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ
 مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ يَبْنَئِ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَ ادْخُلُوا
 مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ ۗ وَ مَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ
 إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۗ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۗ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ
 أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُمْ ۗ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا حَاجَةٌ فِي نَفْسِ
 يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا ۗ وَإِنَّهُ لَذُو عِلْمٍ لِمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
 وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ أَوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا
 كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السَّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ
 ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتُهَا الْعَيْرُ انْتِكُمُ لَسِرِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالُوا وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا

Joseph's brothers came to Egypt and presented themselves before him.⁵⁰ He recognized them but they did not.⁵¹ When he had them given the provisions due to them and they were leaving, he said, "Bring your step-brother to me. Do you not see that I give full measure, and am the best of hosts? But if you do not bring him to me, you shall have no grain from me: nay, you should not even come near me."⁵² They replied, "We will try our very best to persuade his father to send him with us. This we will surely do." Joseph spoke aside to his slaves. "Place secretly in their saddle-bags the goods they have bartered for corn." Joseph did this in the hope that, when they would return home to their people, they would come to know of it; maybe they should come back again. 58-62

When they returned to their father, they said, "Dear father, now that corn has henceforth been denied to us, please send our brother with us so that we may fetch corn, and we take full responsibility for his safety." The father replied, "Should I entrust him to you, as I entrusted his brother to you before? Allah is the best Guardian and He is the most Merciful." When they opened their saddle-bags, they found that their merchandise had also been returned to them. Seeing this, they cried with joy, "Dear father, look here! What more do we desire? Here is our merchandise returned to us. Therefore, we will go back and bring provisions of food for our family; we will take good care of our brother, and obtain an extra camel-load of corn. Such an addition will be made easily." Their father replied, "I will never send him with you until you give me a pledge in Allah's name that you shall bring him back to me unless it be that you are rendered helpless by circumstances." When they had given him their solemn pledges, he said, "Note it well that Allah is guarding and watching over this pledge of ours." Then he said, "O my children, do not enter the capital of Egypt by one gate but go into it by different gates."⁵³ However, know it well that I cannot ward off from you Allah's will for none other than He has any authority whatsoever. In Him I have put my trust and all who want to rely upon anyone should put their trust in Him alone." And it so happened that when they entered the city by different gates, as their father 63-68

had advised them, the precautionary measure proved ineffective against Allah's will. Of course, Jacob had done his best to avert the fear he had in his heart. Indeed he possessed knowledge because of what We had taught him: but most people do not understand the reality of the matter.⁵⁴

69 When they presented themselves before Joseph, he called his brother alone to himself, and said to him, "I am the same brother of yours (who was lost). Now you need not grieve for what they have been doing."⁵⁵

50. The events of several years after his coming into power have been left out for the sake of brevity, and the story has been resumed from the time when the brothers of Prophet Joseph came to Egypt, and paved the way for the eventual settlement of the Israelites in Egypt. It will, however, be worthwhile to have a glimpse of those events. During the first seven years of his reign, there was abundance of corn as he had predicted while interpreting the dream of the king. Accordingly he adopted all the measures he had put before the king concerning the years of plenty. Then the seven years of scarcity began and famine reigned not only over Egypt but all over the adjoining countries. Accordingly, Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and the Northern part of Arabia began to suffer from the scarcity of food, but there was plenty of it in Egypt in spite of famine because of the wise steps Prophet Joseph had taken as a safeguard. That was why his brothers, like other neighbouring people, were forced by circumstances to go to Egypt and present themselves before him. It appears that Prophet Joseph had so arranged things that no foreigner was allowed to buy corn without a special permit from him. Therefore when the brothers reached Egypt, they might have had to present themselves before him for obtaining the special permit for buying the fixed quantity allowed under the famine regulations.

51. It is no wonder that his brothers could not recognize Prophet Joseph, for, when they cast him into the well, he was merely a lad of seventeen and at the time of their meeting, he was a grown up man of thirty-eight years or so. Naturally, he must have changed in form during this long period. Besides, they could never have imagined that the brother whom they had cast into the well had become the ruler of Egypt.

52. As the Qurān has omitted the details, someone might be at a loss to know as to how he brought Benjamin into the conversation with his brothers, and why he insisted on them to bring him with them, when he intended to keep his own identity secret from them. For, obviously these things might have led to the revelation of that secret. But a little thinking will show that he could have very easily and naturally led the conversation up to Benjamin without arousing their curiosity. As there were strict restrictions on the purchase of corn, everyone was permitted to buy only

a fixed quantity of it. Most probably the ten brothers had applied for corn for their father and the eleventh brother as well. At this Prophet Joseph might have asked the reason why their father and brother had not personally come for it. Then he might have accepted the excuse for their father that he was old and blind but he would have expressed his doubts about their excuse for their brother that he was their step-brother and the father would not send him with them and so forth. Then he might have declared, "Well, this time we give you as much corn as you have asked for, but the next time you come here you should bring your step-brother with you; otherwise you will not get any corn at all because of this false statement of yours." Along with this threat, he tried to win them over by reminding them of his liberal and generous treatment with them, because he yearned for the sight of his younger brother, and was anxious to know how his family had fared during his absence.

The above is a simple and natural explanation of the matter. Thus, this part of the story as given in the Bible (Gen. chapters 42 and 43) appears to be far-fetched, exaggerated, unreal and, therefore, un-reliable.

53. Prophet Jacob's great concern over this journey of his sons was due to the fact that his youngest son, Benjamin, was to accompany them. He was anxious about his safety because he had already had a sad experience of his son, Joseph. Naturally his heart must have been full of such misgivings that that might be his last meeting with his other beloved son. Though he had full trust in Allah and was patiently resigned to His will, he, as a human being, advised his sons to take certain precautionary measures. In order to understand the significance of this precautionary measure of entering the capital by different gates, we should have a glimpse of the political conditions of that period. As the Israelites lived on the Eastern frontier of Egypt as independent clans, they were looked at with suspicion like all frontier people. Therefore Prophet Jacob feared that if they entered the city in a group, they might be taken for a gang of suspects, especially during that time of famine. Thus there was an apprehension of some severe action being taken against them as if they had come there for organized robbery. That was why he gave them this allowance that if under such adverse circumstances there was any trouble, he would not accuse them of breach of the pledge for the safety of Benjamin.

54. "Most people do not understand...." how Prophet Jacob was able to hold the balance between "trust in Allah" and adoption of precautionary measures. This was because Allah had favoured him with the real knowledge. That was why he took all those measures which were dictated by common sense, deep thinking and experience. He admonished them for their ill treatment with their brother Joseph so that they should not dare repeat it in the case of Benjamin. He took a solemn pledge from them in the name of Allah that they would take good care of the safety of their step-brother. Then he advised them to be on their

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تَفْقِدُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ قَالُوا تَفْقِدُ صَوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ
 زَعِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا
 سُرِقِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كَذِبِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ وَجَدَ
 فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ
 وَعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ۗ مَا كَانَ
 لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۗ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ ۗ وَفَوْقَ
 كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَسْرَمَهَا
 يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ ۗ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
 تَصِفُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ ۗ
 إِنَّا نُرِيدُكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا
 عِنْدَهُ ۗ إِنَّا إِذَا نَظَرْنَا لَظَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْشَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا ۗ قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ
 أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ آبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا
 فَرَطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ ۗ فَلَنْ أُبْرَحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ
 لِي ۗ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ ارْجِعُوا إِلَى آبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ
 وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَسُئِلَ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي
 كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعَيْرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا ۗ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ
 أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا ۗ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ ۗ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
 الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا سَفَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ
 مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتُوا تَذَكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ

While Joseph was arranging for the loading of the packs of his brothers, he put his cup in the pack of his own brother.⁵⁶ Afterwards a herald shouted, "Ho, cameleers! you are thieves."⁵⁷ Turning back, they asked, "What is it that you are missing?" The royal servants replied, "We do not find the cup of the king." (And their headman added,) "The one, who would restore it, will be awarded a camel-load of corn. I guarantee this." The brothers replied, "By God, you know it well that we have not come for spreading disorder in this country, and we are no thieves." At this, they said, "Very well, what shall be the punishment of the thief, if you are found to be liars?" They replied, "His punishment should be that he himself be made a bondsman, if the thing is found in his pack. At home we punish such offenders like this."⁵⁸ Then Joseph first began to search the packs of his step-brothers before searching the pack of his own brother. At last he took it out from the pack of his brother. Thus We supported Joseph with Our plan:⁵⁹ for it did not behove Joseph to seize his brother (by the king's law) except that Allah willed it so.⁶⁰ We raise high the ranks of those We will, and there is the One Whose knowledge is far greater than the knowledge of all others.

At this discovery the brothers remarked, "There is nothing strange in it that he has committed a theft, for his brother (Joseph) also committed a theft before this."⁶¹ Hearing this, Joseph suppressed his feelings and did not reveal the secret to them, but said only this in an under-tone, "What a bad people you are! you are accusing me (to my face) of the thing the truth of which Allah knows best."

Then they said, "O exalted sir,⁶² he has a very aged father: therefore take one of us in his stead. We see that you are a very generous man." Joseph replied, "God forbid that we should seize any other than the one with whom we have found our property⁶³: for, if we do this, we shall be unjust."

When they despaired of moving Joseph, they went to a corner and conferred together. The eldest of them said, "You know that your father has taken a solemn pledge from you in the name of Allah, and you also know that you had wronged Joseph before this. I will not, therefore, leave this

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land until my father gives me permission or Allah decides in my favour, for Allah is the best of all those who decide. Go back to your father and say, 'Dear father, your son committed a theft. We did not see him stealing: we are simply stating what we have come to know and we could not guard against the unforeseen. You may enquire from the people of that town and from the caravan in which we travelled back home. We are surely telling the truth'."

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guard against the dangerous political situation and to enter the capital by different gates so as not to give cause for alarm and suspicion. In short, as far as it was humanly possible, he took all the precautionary measures to avoid every possible risk. On the other hand, he always kept this thing in view (and expressed it) that no human precautionary measure could avert the enforcement of Allah's will, and that the real protection was Allah's protection : and that one should not rely on the precautionary measures but on the favour of Allah. Obviously only that person who has the real knowledge can keep such a balance in his words and deeds, who knows what kind of efforts are demanded of his human faculties bestowed by Allah for the solution of worldly problems, who also realizes that it is Allah alone Who has the power to make them a success or a failure. This is "what most people do not understand". Some of them rely merely on their efforts and measures and discard trust in Allah; while there are others who rely merely on "trust in Allah" and do not adopt any practical measure to solve their problem.

55. The whole story of their reunion after a separation of twenty years or so has been summed up in this brief sentence. In all probability Prophet Joseph might have told him the story of the vicissitudes that ultimately had led to his high rank, and Benjamin in his turn might have related the story of the ill-treatment of the heartless step-brothers. Then Prophet Joseph might have reassured him that he would not be allowed to go back with them but remain with him. It is also possible that the plan to retain him there, without disclosing the secret of Prophet Joseph's identity, would have then been thought out and decided upon.

56. In all probability, Prophet Joseph put the cup in his brother's pack with his knowledge and consent, as may be inferred from the preceding verse. Obviously, Prophet Joseph desired to free his brother from the oppression of the cruel step-brothers and he himself was reluctant to go back with them. But this could not be done directly and openly without disclosing his own identity, which was not then expedient under the circumstances. Therefore both the brothers might have thought out this plan, though this would have put the younger brother in an embarrassing situation for the time being because of his involvement in a case of theft. But they had adopted this plan because afterwards both the

brothers could clear it easily by disclosing the real matter.

57. There is nothing in this verse nor in the succeeding verses to show that Prophet Joseph took his servants in his confidence in regard to this matter, and instructed them to bring a false accusation against the travellers. The simple explanation of the incident may be this. The cup might have been quietly and secretly put in the pack. Afterwards when the servants did not find it, they might have come to the inevitable conclusion that it must have been stolen by the travellers who were staying there.

58. It should be kept in mind that these people were the descendants of Prophet Abraham. Therefore they put forward his law regarding a thief, that is, the thief should be made the bondsman of the one whose goods he had stolen.

59. Now let us consider the question : How did Allah directly support Prophet Joseph with His plan? It is obvious that the plan of placing the cup in Benjamin's pack was thought out and executed by Joseph himself. And it is also obvious that the royal servants checked their packs as a matter of routine for such is the procedure that is generally followed on such occasions. There is nothing in this passage that might be called supernatural support by Allah except that the servants asked the brothers to prescribe the punishment for the thief, and they answered that he should be made a bondsman. The sentence that follows also confirms this interpretation.

60. Had Allah willed it, He would not have removed the flaw in the plan of Prophet Joseph. It was this : he could seize his brother according to his plan only by the help of the king's law, but it was not worthy of a Prophet of Allah to apply that un-Islamic law to his own personal case. For he had taken political power in his hands in order to establish gradually the Islamic law and not to enforce and keep the king's law in vogue. Had Allah willed it, He would have left no other course for His Prophet except to have resort to the un-Islamic law. But He did not will it so because He did not like to tarnish the fair name of His Prophet. Therefore he made the servants enquire from the brothers (an unusual thing) about the punishment of a thief and they stated the Law of Prophet Abraham. Thus not only was the flaw removed, but also no room was left for the brothers to raise any objection against this on the plea that they were not Egyptians, and therefore the law of the land could not be applied against them. As has already been pointed out, this was the support of Allah to which He has referred in the two subsequent verses as a token of His favour and a sign of the perfection of His knowledge.

The favour of Allah was that He saved Prophet Joseph from applying the un-Islamic law of the king of Egypt to his personal case, for he was liable to do so under the stress of human weakness. And there can be no greater favour for one than this that Allah Himself should arrange to guard his high moral position. It should, however, be noted that such

a high rank is awarded only to those who prove themselves to be "righteous" in very hard trials.

By removing the flaw in his plan, Allah showed that His knowledge was far superior to the knowledge of those, whom (like Prophet Joseph) He had endowed with knowledge.

In this connection, there are some other points worthy of consideration and we will deal with them briefly :—

(1) Generally the words **مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ** are translated like this: "Joseph could not seize his brother by the law of the king", or "Joseph was not authorized to seize his brother according to the law of the king." In other words, it means, "He could not do this, as there was no provision for it in the king's law." Whereas it means this : "He ought not to have seized him by the king's law, as it did not behove him to do so." This version is open to two objections. Firstly, this is against the Qurānic usage of **مَا كَانَ لَهُ** which usually means, "It did not behove him", "It was not right for him" and "He ought not to have done this." For instance, this is what it means in the following verses :—

"Indeed, Islam alone is the Right Way in the sight of Allah." (III : 18).

"Whosoever will adopt any other way than the way of Islam, it shall not be accepted...." (III : 85).

Secondly, such a version is meaningless, for there could have been no reason why he had not the power to seize him for theft according to the law of the king. Can there be any kingdom without having a law for taking action against a thief?

(2) As the Qurān uses the word **دِينِ الْمَلِكِ** which connotes "the king's way of life" in addition to "the king's law", it helps to understand the meaning of the sentence under discussion. For it is obvious that the Prophet was sent to establish the way of Allah and not the un-Islamic way of the king. Though by that time he had only partially succeeded in this Mission, it was not proper and worthy of a Prophet to adopt "the way of the king" for his own personal case. Though there was no legal hindrance in his way to seize his brother according to the king's law, nevertheless, it was inappropriate for him, as a Prophet, to adopt the king's way which he had hitherto scrupulously avoided as far as his own person was concerned. Thus it is clear that its appropriate interpretation will be this : "It did not behove Joseph to seize his brother by the king's law."

(3) Besides this, by using the word **دِينِ الْمَلِكِ** for the "law of the land", Allah has denoted the vast comprehension of the word **دين** (*din*), and this cuts at the root of the conception of *din* of those people who confine the scope of the Message of the Prophets to mere worship of One Allah and believe that it has nothing to do with the cultural, political,

social, judicial, legal and other mundane affairs of life. Or, they opine that, if at all it has any concern with those matters, it is merely to give some instructions of an optional nature in regard to these, and leave it to the believers to adopt these or their own man-made laws, because, they think, there is no harm even in adopting the latter course. This erroneous conception of *dīn*, which has been in vogue among the Muslims for a long time, has been responsible for rendering them neglectful of making exertions for the establishment of the Islamic Way of life. As a result of this misconception of *dīn*, they became reconciled to un-Islamic ways of unbelief and ignorance. Nay, they considered this misconception of theirs to be the pattern set by Prophet Joseph and became willing helpers and servants of these un-Islamic systems. Whereas this verse categorically refutes this misconception by declaring that the "law of the land" is as much a part of the *dīn* of Allah as Ṣalāt, Ḥaj, Fast, and Zakāt are. Therefore, the demand of the acceptance of ^{اَلدِّينِ} (*ad-Dīn*) made in v. 19 and v. 85 of ĀL-I-‘IMRĀN, that is, "Indeed, Islam alone is ^{اَلدِّينِ}, the Right Way, in the sight of Allah" and "Whosoever will adopt any other way (^{دِينِ}), than the Way of Islam, it shall not be accepted", includes laws as well as Ṣalāt and other obligatory duties prescribed by Allah. Therefore the exclusion of this part of *dīn* from any system would incur the displeasure of Allah.

(4) The above interpretation, however, is open to one objection. It does, at least, imply that an un-Islamic way was in vogue in Egypt at the time, when Prophet Joseph was, even according to the present commentator, the supreme head of the country. It is, therefore, a proof that that Prophet himself was enforcing the un-Islamic law of the king. What difference, then, could it have made, if Prophet Joseph had followed, in his personal case too, the system of law of the king which he himself was enforcing instead of the system of law of Prophet Abraham? Most certainly this would have made a vast difference because it would have compromised his position as a Prophet, because he was trying to establish the Islamic Way of life, which naturally could have been accomplished gradually in course of time, during which the king's law would have inevitably remained in vogue. The same thing happened in Arabia during the Mission of the Holy Prophet in Madinah, which took nine years to establish the Islamic System in its entirety. During that period, several un-Islamic laws remained in vogue. For instance, drinking, interest, the un-Islamic laws of inheritance and marriage and some wrong ways of trade, etc., had to continue for some time. Likewise the civil and penal codes of Islam took some time for their complete introduction. So there is nothing strange in this that the king's law continued to be in vogue during the first nine years or so of Prophet Joseph's reign. But the con-

tinuance of the un-Islamic law of the king during the period of transition is no argument to prove that Allah's Prophet was sent to follow the way of the king and not to establish the Way of Allah.

As regards the question why it was not worthy of Prophet Joseph to apply the king's law to his personal case, its best answer is again found in the practice of the Holy Prophet. During the interim period, when the laws of ignorance had not yet been replaced by Islamic Laws, other Muslims went on drinking wine and taking interest as before, but the Holy Prophet never practised any of these things. Likewise some un-Islamic laws of marriage, such as taking in marriage of real sisters at one and the same time, were practised, but the Holy Prophet never practised any such thing. Thus it is clear that there was a difference between leaving in vogue some un-Islamic laws during the period of the evolution of the Islamic Law and practising the same. Had Prophet Joseph applied the king's law to his own case, it would have meant that he had lent his seeming sanction to that law. But it is obvious that a Prophet, who is sent to eliminate the ways of ignorance, cannot follow these even under the temporary leave that is given to others.

61. They made this accusation merely to cover the humiliation to which they were put at the discovery of the cup in the pack of their brother. Now that the discovery falsified their claim that they were not thieves, they at once changed their position and dissociated themselves from Benjamin, declaring that he was a thief like his brother Joseph. It is obvious that this was a false accusation the clever brothers had invented on the spot. But it is an instance of the malice these brothers bore to their two step-brothers, and is also the answer to the question why Prophet Joseph desired to keep his brother with him.

62. The use of the title *الْعَزِيزُ* ("the exalted one") with which they addressed Prophet Joseph has given rise to the confusion that he held the same office as the husband of Zelicha held before him. Then this misunderstanding led the commentators to the invention of further comments, such as, Al-'Aziz had died and Prophet Joseph was appointed in his place, and Zelicha was re-juvenated by a miracle and married to him by the king. They have not stopped at this : they have, somehow or other, discovered even the conversation that took place between Prophet Joseph and Zelicha in the first night of their marriage. In fact, all this is mere fiction, for, as has already been pointed out, the word *عَزِيزٌ* was the Arabic translation or equivalent of some Egyptian title, and was not the designation of any particular office. It was merely a title used for the high ones in Egypt like "His Excellency" or "Your Excellency", etc. As regards the said marriage, this fiction has been built on the story of Prophet Joseph's marriage in the Bible and the Talmud. According to these, he was married with Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah. As the name of the

husband of Zelicha was Potiphar, the two names got confused together. Accordingly, when the story was handed down from the traditions of the Israelites from one commentator to the other, the name Potiphar got interchanged with Poti-pherah because the two were so like each other in sound. Consequently, the daughter in the story was replaced by "wife". Then Potiphar was "killed" in order to facilitate the marriage. Then the only remaining difficulty, that is, the disparity of their ages, was got over with the help of a miracle. She was re-juvenated so completely as to enable her to become the worthy wife of the "ruler" of the land.

63. The use of the words ".....with whom we have found our property" instead of the word "thief" is very significant. Prophet Joseph avoided the use of the word "thief" for his brother because he was not really a thief. This is called *توريه* (*touriyah*), that is, to put a cover over a reality or "to hide a reality." Such a practice is allowed by the Muslim Law under certain conditions and with certain limitations. It may be practised not to gain any selfish end, but to ward off some evil or to protect and save an oppressed person from some oppressor, provided that no other course might have been left except saying something against the truth or of having a resort to a deceitful device. It is obvious that in such a case, a righteous person will not tell a blunt lie or resort to an open deceit. Instead, he will say something or do something that might not be strictly truthful or strictly right, yet at the same time is not a blunt lie, so that he might hide the reality to ward off the evil. Such a practice is lawful, legally and morally, provided that it is not practised to gain some personal or selfish ends but to ward off a greater evil with a lesser evil. Accordingly, Prophet Joseph scrupulously fulfilled all the conditions in this case. He placed the cup in the pack of his brother with his consent, but he did not ask his servants to make a search of his pack and accuse him of theft. After this, when the servants brought the brothers before him as suspects, he quietly rose from his seat and began to make a search of their packs. Then afterwards, when the brothers requested that one of them should be taken instead of Benjamin, he answered them back in their own words that he would detain only that person in whose possession the cup was found and none else.

Instances of such a practice during his campaigns are found in the life history of the Holy Prophet. And this cannot be regarded as morally objectionable according to any moral or legal standard.

حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ
 أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ يَبْتِئُ إِذْ هَبُوا فْتَحَسُّوْا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَ
 أَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْتِسُوا مِنْ دُورِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُ مِنْ دُورِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ
 الْكٰفِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسْنَا وَاهْلَكْنَا الضَّرُّ وَ
 جِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي
 الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَ أَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
 قَالُوا عَرَانِكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَ هَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا
 إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ
 اشْرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ لَا تَتْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ
 اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ إِذْ هَبُوا بِقَبِيصِي هَذَا فَالْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ
 أَبِي يَاتٍ بَصِيرًا ۗ وَآتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَ لَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ
 أَبُوهُمُ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْ لَا أَنْ تُفَنِّدُونِ ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي
 ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا ﴿٦٥﴾
 قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالُوا يَا بَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ
 لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِئِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ
 الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوَى إِلَيْهِ أَبُوهُ وَ قَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ
 إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَ رَفَعَ أَبُوهُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَ خَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا ۗ وَ
 قَالَ يَا بَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلْنَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۗ وَ قَدْ أَحْسَنَ
 بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَ جَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ

Hearing this story, the father said, "Your souls have made another thing easy for you.⁶⁴ Well, I will bear this, too, patiently with a good grace. Maybe Allah will bring them all to me, for He knows everything and all His works are based on wisdom." Then he turned his face from them and cried, "Alas for Joseph!"—He was sorely oppressed with suppressed sorrow and his eyes had become white with grief.—The sons exclaimed, "By Allah! You have not ceased to think of Joseph and now things have come to such a pass that you will ruin your health or kill yourself with grief for him." He replied, "I complain to Allah alone of my sorrow and grief. And I know from Allah what you do not know. My children, go and make a search for Joseph and his brother. Don't despair of Allah's mercy, for it is the unbelievers alone who despair of His mercy."

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When they went back to Egypt and presented themselves before Joseph, they humbly said, "Exalted sir! we and our family are in great distress: though we have been able to bring only goods of scant worth for barter, we request you to give us full measure of grain, and be charitable to us:⁶⁵ for Allah rewards richly those who are charitable." At this Joseph, who could contain himself no longer, exclaimed, "Do you know what you did with Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant?" This took them by surprise and they cried, "Why! are you indeed Joseph?" He replied, "Yes, I am Joseph, and here is my brother. Allah has been very gracious to us. The fact is that Allah does not let go waste the recompense of such righteous people as practise piety and fortitude." They said, "By God! Allah has exalted you above us, and we have indeed been sinful." He replied, "Today no penalty shall be inflicted on you. May Allah forgive you! He is the most Merciful of all. Go, take this shirt of mine, and cast this over the face of my father and he shall recover his sight. Then bring all the members of your family to me."

When this caravan departed (from Egypt), their father said (in Cana'ān), "I am surely perceiving the smell⁶⁶ of Joseph, though you might think me to be in the dotage." The people of the house answered, "By God, you are still suffering from your old illusion."⁶⁷

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But when the bearer of the good tidings arrived there, he cast Joseph's shirt on Jacob's face, and his sight came back to him. Then he said, "Didn't I say to you that I know from Allah what you do not know?" They exclaimed all together, "Dear father, pray for the pardon of our sins, for we have indeed been sinful." He replied, "I will implore my Lord to forgive you, for He is Forgiving and Merciful."

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And when they came to Joseph,⁶⁸ he seated his parents along with himself and said (to the people of his family), "Now proceed to the city. God willing, you will live in peace."

64. That is, "You readily believed that my son, whom I know to be of a noble character, had committed the theft of a cup : you have behaved in his case just as you behaved in the case of his elder brother. You made away with him and then pretended, without any pangs of conscience, that a wolf had devoured him and now, with the same ease, you tell me that the other brother has committed a theft."

65. That is, "It will be charitable of you if you give us that much grain as we require to fulfil our needs, because the goods we have brought for its barter are of less value than of the grain we require."

66. This is an instance of the extraordinary powers the Prophets possess. Prophet Jacob perceived in Cana'an the smell of Prophet Joseph's shirt from such a distant place as Egypt as soon as the caravan started on the journey. At the same time it also shows, by contrast, that these powers of the Prophets are not inherent or personal characteristics but are bestowed on them by Allah as and when He wills. That is why Prophet Jacob could not perceive the smell of the clothes of Prophet Joseph as long as Allah did not will it, when he had been living in Egypt.

In this connection, it should also be noted that in contrast to the Qurān which represents Prophet Jacob as a great Prophet who was able to perceive the smell of Prophet Joseph from such a long distance, the Bible represents him as an ordinary uncultured father. According to GENESIS 45 : 26-27, when they told him, saying, "Joseph is yet alive and he is governor over all the land of Egypt—Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not . . . and only when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived."

67. This remark shows that no member of his family except Prophet Joseph appreciated the true worth of Prophet Jacob. He himself was aware of the low state of their mental and moral condition. And it is one of the ironies of fate that the majority of the great personalities who made history got very little appreciation at home.

68. It is worthwhile to take notice of the total number of Prophet Jacob's family members that migrated to Egypt with him, for it is closely connected with the problem that is raised concerning the total number of the Israelites who emigrated from there some five hundred years after this.

According to the Bible, the total number of the family members was 70, including Prophet Joseph and his two sons, and excluding those daughters-in-law who did not belong to the family of Prophet Jacob. But according to the census figures given in NUMBERS, their number was about two million when they were counted in the wilderness of Sinai in the second year, "after they were come out of the land of Egypt". The problem is this: how is it possible that "these three score and ten souls of his house" had multiplied into two million souls during five hundred years or so?

It is obvious that no family can multiply to such a large number in five hundred years merely by the generative process. Thus the only other way in which their number could have been increased was proselytism. And there are sound reasons to believe that this must have been so. The Israelites were the descendants of Prophets. They had migrated to Egypt because of the power Prophet Joseph enjoyed there. And we have seen that he made full use of every opportunity he got for carrying out the work of the Mission of Prophethood. Therefore it may reasonably be expected that the Israelites would have done their very best to convert the Egyptians to their faith of Islam during the five centuries of their power in Egypt. As a result of this the Egyptian converts to Islam would not only have changed their religion but also their culture so as to make them look quite different from the other Egyptians and look like the Israelites. Naturally the non-Muslim Egyptians would have declared them to be foreigners just as the Hindus treat the Indian Muslims of today. By and by they themselves would have accepted this position and become members of the Israelite nationality. Afterwards, when the Egyptian nationalists began to persecute the alien Israelites, the Muslim Egyptians were also made a target of their tyranny. So when the Israelites migrated from Egypt, they, too, left their country along with them and began to be counted among them.

The above mentioned explanation is confirmed by the Bible also. For instance, it says that when they left Egypt, "the children of Israel journeyd from Rameses to Succoth . . . and a mixed multitude went up also with them . . ." (EXODUS 12 : 37-38) and "the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting". (NUMBERS 11 : 4). Then by and by these non-Israelite converts to Islam began to be called "the stranger". "One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and the one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." (NUMBERS 15 : 15-16). "And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." (DEUT. 1 : 16).

Now it is not an easy thing to find out the exact term which was applied in the original Scriptures to the Egyptian converts to Islam, and which was afterwards changed into the "stranger" by the translators.

الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ
 الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٥﴾ رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ
 فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيَّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ تَوَقَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَ
 الْحَقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ ۗ وَمَا كُنْتَ
 لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَمَا أَكْثَرَ النَّاسَ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ
 بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَكَأَيِّن
 مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَا
 يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ
 عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي
 أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۗ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ
 الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ
 الْقُرَىٰ ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
 قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
 اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۗ فَنَجَّيْنَا مِنَ
 نَشَأِهِمْ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ
 لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَ
 تَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

١١
ع
٥

وقفت النبي
عليه السلام

١٢
ع
٦

(After entering the town,) he raised his parents to the throne,⁶⁹ and seated them along with himself and all of them spontaneously bowed down before him.⁷⁰ Joseph said, "Dear father, this is the interpretation of the dream I dreamt long before. my Lord has now turned that into reality. It is His grace that He took me out of the prison and brought you to me from the desert after Satan had stirred up strife between me and my brothers. It is a fact that my Lord fulfils His designs in mysterious ways, for He is All-Knowing, All-Wise. Lord, Thou hast given me kingdom and taught me how to probe into problems. Creator of the earth and the heavens! Thou art my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter: Let me die as a Muslim, and join me with the righteous in the end."⁷¹ 100-101

O Muhammad! this story which We are revealing to you is of those things that were not known to you: for you were not with the brothers when they had conspired together a plot against Joseph. Yet most of the people are not going to believe it, howsoever eager⁷² you may be, and may even demand no recompense for this Message: it is simply an instruction for all the people of the world.⁷³ 102-104

And⁷⁴ many are the Signs in the heavens and the earth; yet they pass by and pay no heed to them.⁷⁵ So, most of them who believe in Allah join other deities also with Him.⁷⁶ Do they feel secure that Allah's scourge shall not overwhelm them, or that the hour of Doom will not come upon them suddenly when they are unaware?⁷⁷ 105-107

Tell them plainly, "This is my way. I invite you to Allah. I myself see my Way in full light and my followers see it, too. And Allah is free from any defect,⁷⁸ and I have nothing to do with those who practise *shirk*". 108

O Muhammad! all the Messengers, whom We sent before you, were also human beings, and lived in the same habitations, and to them We sent Our Revelations. Have these people, then, not travelled in the land and seen what has been the end of those who have passed away before them? Surely, the abode of the Hereafter is far better for those who (believed in the Messengers and) adopted the attitude of piety. What! will you not understand it even now?⁷⁹ (It also happened like this with the former Messengers: they went on 109-110

conveying the Message for a long time but the people did not listen to them,) till the Messengers despaired of the people and the people also thought that a falsehood had been presented to them: then suddenly Our succour reached the Messengers. And when such an occasion comes, We deliver whomsoever We will, but Our scourge cannot be averted from the criminals.

111 There is an object lesson in these stories of the former people for those, who possess common sense. That thing which is being sent down in the Qurān is not a forgery, but (is absolutely genuine and) it confirms the previous Scriptures, gives details⁸⁰ of everything, and is a guidance and blessing for the Believers.

69. According to the Talmud, "When Joseph learned that his father was upon the way, he gathered together his friends and officers, and soldiers of the realm, attired in rich garments,....and formed a great company to meet Prophet Jacob on the way and escort him to Egypt. Music and gladness filled the land, and all the people, the women and the children, assembled on the house-tops to view the magnificent display." (H. Polano, p. 111).

70. The interpretation of this verse has given rise to some serious misunderstandings, which are against the very fundamentals of the Divine Guidance. So much so that some people have gone to the extreme of making it lawful to prostrate before kings and saints as a mark of respect. Others more strict on this point have explained it away, saying, "In the former Divine Laws, it was unlawful only to prostrate in worship before others than Allah, though it was permissible to prostrate before others if it was done without the intention of worship, but now in the Divine Law given to Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) it has been made absolutely unlawful".

Such misunderstandings as these have resulted from taking the words "وَوَخَرُّوْا لَهُ سَجْدًا" in this verse to mean "to perform *sajdah*" in the technical sense in which it is now used in the Islamic code, that is, "lying flat in such a way that the hands, the knees and the forehead touch the ground," whereas the word سَجَدًا (*sujjadan*) has been used here in its literal meaning of *sajūd* "to bow down". The parents and brothers of Prophet Joseph bowed down before him in accordance with the ancient custom among the people of the age, (and the custom is still in vogue among some people), who used to bow down before others to show their gratitude, or welcome them, or merely to salute them by placing their hand on the breast. There are many instances of this in the Bible. "...and when he (Abraham) saw them (the three men) coming towards him, he ran to meet them from

the tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground." (Please refer to Arabic translation : Gen. 18 : 32). Further on it says that when the children of Heth gave a field and a cave as a burying place for Sarah, Prophet Abraham was so grateful to them that "he stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth," (Gen. 23: 7) and "Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land." (Gen. 23 : 12). In both cases the words 'bowed down' have been translated into "سَجَدَ" (*Sajada*).

These and other like instances in the Bible are a conclusive proof of the fact that in this verse (100), the Qurān has not used the word سَجَدَ in its technical Islamic sense but in its literal sense.

Besides, those commentators are absolutely wrong who suppose that in the former laws, *sajdah* in the present Islamic sense was allowed as a mark of respect to others than Allah. *Sajdah* in this sense was always unlawful according to all laws. For instance, during the Babylonian captivity of the Children of Israel, king Aha-suerus promoted Haman above all the princes and commanded all his servants to bow and reverence him, but Mordecai, who was a holy and righteous man among the Jews, bowed not, nor did him reverence. (ESTHER 3 : 1-2). The Talmud has elaborated this point in a way that is worth reading :

The servants of the king said to Mordecai : "Why wilt thou refuse to bow before Haman, transgressing thus the wishes of the king? Do we not bow before him?" "Ye are foolish," answered Mordecai, "aye, wanting in reason. Listen to me. Shall a mortal, who must return to dust be glorified? Shall I bow down before one born of woman, whose days are short? When he is small he cries and weeps as a child; when he grows older sorrow and sighing are his portion; his days are full of wrath and anger, and at the end he returns to dust. Shall I bow to one like to him? No, I prostrate myself before the Eternal God, who lives for ever. To Him the great Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and to no other will I bow." (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, p. 172).

This speech which was made by a Believer from among the Israelites a thousand years before the Revelation of the Qurān, is conclusive on the point. Thus there is absolutely no room for the performance of "*sajdah*" before any other than Allah.

71. The few sentences that were uttered by Prophet Joseph (Allah's peace be upon him) at the happiest occasion of his life help depict the most graceful pattern of the virtues of a true Believer. There is the man from the desert, whom his own brothers had, out of jealousy, attempted to kill, now sitting on the throne after passing through many vicissitudes of life. All the members of his family have been forced by famine to come before him for help. The same jealous brothers, who had made an attempt on his life, are now standing before him with down-cast heads. Had there been a "successful man of the world" in his place, he would have used this

opportunity for boasting of his greatness and bragging of his successes, and giving vent to his grievances and hurling malicious taunts at his defeated enemies. In utter contrast to this, the true man of God behaves in a quite different way. Instead of boasting and bragging of his own greatness, he is grateful to his God Who had shown grace to him by raising him to such a high position of power, and for arranging his meeting with his people after such a long period of separation. Instead of giving vent to his grievances against his brothers, making taunts at them for their ill-treatment, he does not make even a mention of such things but puts up a defence for them, saying that it was all due to Satan, who had stirred up strife between them : nay, he even puts it forward as a blessing in disguise, being one of the mysterious ways of Allah by which He had fulfilled His design of raising him to the throne. After saying these things in a few concise sentences, he at once turns to his Lord in gratitude for bestowing on him kingdom and wisdom, instead of letting him rot in the prison, and prays to Him to keep him as His faithful and obedient servant as long as he was alive, and to join him with the righteous people after his death. What a pure and high pattern of character !

It is strange that this speech of Prophet Joseph has neither found a place in the Bible nor in the Talmud, though these books are full of irrelevant and un-important details of this story and others. It is an irony that these Books are void of those things that teach moral values and throw light on the real characters and the Mission of the Prophets.

Now that this story has come to an end, the readers are again reminded that this story of Prophet Joseph as given in the Qurān is not a copy of the story given in the Bible and the Talmud for there are striking differences between them. A comparative study of these Books will show that the story in the Qurān differs from that given in the other two Books in several very important parts. The Qurān contains additional facts in some cases and omits certain facts in other cases or even refutes some parts as contained in the Bible and the Talmud. Therefore there is absolutely no room for anyone to allege that Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) related this story merely in the form he heard it from the Israelites.

72. In order to grasp the full significance of the underlying admonition implied in it, we must keep in view the background of the Revelation of this story given in the introduction to this Sūrah. The Quraish themselves had invited the Holy Prophet to a meeting that had been arranged for putting him to a test which was to show whether he was a true Prophet or not. When he arrived there, they put him this question without any previous notice or intimation : why did the Israelites go to Egypt? In answer to this, the Holy Prophet recited this Sūrah then and there. As they themselves knew that this was an abrupt question and there had been no preparation for its answer beforehand, it was expected that they would believe in his Prophethood. But they were so obdurate that they did not believe in him even then. As Allah was aware of their intentions, he in-

formed His Messenger beforehand, as if to say, "Though you have come out successful in the test, to which they themselves put you, yet most of them are not going to believe it because they are not sincere in their quest for the truth. That is why they will not believe even now when the revelation of this Sūrah has proved conclusively that the Qurān is not being forged by you but is being sent down by Allah Himself. As their real aim and intention is to reject your Message anyhow, they will now invent another excuse for their denial."

This is not meant to remove any misunderstanding the Holy Prophet might have cherished, but is merely an indirect warning to the questioners that Allah knew their intentions well. This was meant to warn them like this : "O obdurate people ! this Sūrah has been placed before you to serve as a mirror for you. You demanded a proof from Our Messenger that he was not forging the Qurān : had you been reasonable and sincere people, you would have accepted the truth that has been established according to your own test, but you are obdurate people and are still denying it."

73. This is another admonition more subtle than the one given above. Though this, too, has been addressed to the Holy Prophet, it is meant for the unbelievers, as if to say, "O people ! consider your attitude towards the Message from another point of view. Had you noticed anything in the Mission and the Message of Our Prophet that might have smelt of any self-interest whatever, you would have been justified in rejecting it as the work of a selfish person. But you yourselves have experienced it that he has absolutely no self-interest in his work and demands no recompense for the Message, which is nothing but instruction for all the people of the world. Therefore you should listen to it and consider it without prejudice and make your decisions about it on merit and merit alone."

74. Now that the story of Prophet Joseph (Allah's peace be upon him) has come to an end, the Qurān has made use of the opportunity for conveying its basic Message, for it does not tell stories merely for the sake of story-telling. As they themselves had invited the Prophet and were attentively listening to the story, the essence of the Message was presented in a few concise sentences (VV. 105-111).

75. This is to arouse people from their apathy towards the Signs of Allah that lie scattered all over the earth and the heavens and to urge them to make a search for the Reality by making right observations. As each and everything is not merely a "thing" but also a Sign which points to the Reality, a seeker after it should look at these with a look different from that of animals. This is because even an animal sees a tree, a mountain and water and takes it as a mere tree, a mountain or water, and with the help of his senses makes use of these according to his needs. But Allah has endowed man with a mind that is able to consider things in other than their physical and material aspects so that he may think deeply and make

a search for the Reality by means of these Signs of Allah. The reason why people fail to discover the Reality and go astray is that they do not consider things as "Signs" and pay no heed to this aspect. Had they not deliberately shut their minds against the Message of the Prophets, it would not have been difficult for them at all to understand it and get guidance from it.

76. They associate other deities with Allah because they do not pay heed to His Signs, which serve as pointers to the Right Way. So they go astray from it and get lost in thorny bushes. Nevertheless, many of them do not lose sight of the Reality entirely, and do not disbelieve in Allah as their Creator and Sustainer, but they get involved in *shirk*. That is, they do not deny the existence of God, but they believe that there are other deities who are also partners in His Being, His Attributes, His Powers, and His Rights. They would never have been involved in *shirk*, had they considered these Signs in the heavens and the earth from this point of view, for in that case they would have discovered everywhere, in each and every one of them, the proofs of the Oneness of Allah.

77. This question has been posed to rouse the people from their care-free attitude towards life produced by temporary security from dangers, and by a feeling that there is a long life to enjoy : so the problems can be postponed safely to a distant "future". This is obviously a wrong attitude, for no man has any guarantee that he will live up to a certain age : for no one knows when, where and how one would die. Therefore the questions meant to ask, "Does not your daily experience tell you that you knew nothing even a minute beforehand what your future was hiding for you? Therefore, wisdom demands that you should make preparations for it now, and consider seriously whether the path you are treading is the right path. Have you any real proof to show that it is right? Do you find any sound argument in the heavens and the earth to support your decision? Did the people who trod such a path before you reach their destinations safely and securely? Finally, do the results of following such a path, which are appearing in your own time and culture, confirm that you are treading the right path?"

78. That is, "Allah is absolutely free from such things that are ascribed to Him : He is free from the weaknesses and shortcomings which every believer in *shirk* ascribes to Him; He is free from all defects, evils and errors that must necessarily be ascribed to Him as a logical result of the conception of God held by *mushriks*."

79. A very comprehensive subject has been condensed here into a couple of sentences, which may be expanded like this: "O Muhammad! these people do not listen to you because it is not an easy thing for them to believe you to be a Messenger of Allah just because you are a mere human being who was born in their own city among themselves and brought up like other people. But there is nothing strange in this, for this is not the first instance of its kind. All the Prophets, whom We sent

before you, were also human beings and lived in the same habitations to which they were sent. It never happened that a stranger came to a town and declared, "I have been sent as a Messenger to you. On the other hand, all the Prophets—Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Noah (Allah's peace be upon them all)—who were raised for the reform of the people, were human beings who were born and brought up in their own habitations". Then it addresses the disbelievers directly, as if to say, "Now it is for you to judge and decide whether you should accept the Messenger or reject him on such flimsy grounds as these. You have travelled abroad and seen the end of those people who rejected the Message of their Prophets and followed their own lusts. You have seen, on your journeys, the ruined habitations of the people of 'Ād, Thamūd, Midian, Lot, and others. Have you not observed these as object lessons, for these warn you that they would meet with far worse consequences in the Hereafter, and that conversely, those who are pious and God-fearing will have a very happy life?"

80. That is, "It gives details of everything that is required for the guidance of man." Some people take "details of everything" to mean the details of everything in the world. So, when they do not find in it the details of mathematics, physics, medicine etc. etc. they become sceptical. Whereas the Qurān claims to give the details of only one 'subject', "Guidance", for which it has been sent down, and it does give the details of everything that is essential for it.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XIII

AR-RA'AD الرِّعْدُ

INTRODUCTION

Name

This Sūrah takes its name from the word الرِّعْدُ (*ar-Ra'ad*) (thunder) that occurs in v. 13. It is merely the symbolic name of the Sūrah and does not in any way mean that the Sūrah deals with the scientific problems connected with thunder.

Period of Revelation

The internal evidence (vv. 27-31 and vv. 34-48) shows that this Sūrah was revealed in the last stage of the Mission of the Holy Prophet at Makkah and during the same period in which Sūrahs YŪNUS, HŪD and AL-A'ARĀF were sent down. The manner of speech indicates that a long time had passed since the Holy Prophet had been conveying the Message. On the one hand, his opponents had been contriving different devices to defeat him and his Mission, and, on the other, his followers had been expressing a desire that by showing a miracle the disbelievers might be brought to the Right Way. In answer, Allah impressed on the Believers that it is not His way to convert people by this method and that they should not lose heart, if He is giving the enemies of the Truth a rope long enough to hang themselves. Otherwise, He is able to show such signs as may bring the dead out of their graves and make them speak (v. 31), but even then these obdurate people will invent an excuse to explain this away. All this decisive evidence clearly proves that this Sūrah was revealed during the last stage of the Prophet's Mission at Makkah.

Central Theme

The first verse enunciates the main theme of this Sūrah, that is, "The Message of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is the very Truth, but it is the fault of the people that they are rejecting it." This is the pivot on which the whole Sūrah turns. This is why it has been shown over and over again in different ways that the basic components of the Message—*Tauhīd*, Resurrection and Prophethood—are a reality: therefore they should believe sincerely in these for their own moral and spiritual good. They have been warned that they shall incur their own ruin if they reject them, for *kufr* by itself is sheer folly and ignorance. Moreover, the aim of the Sūrah is not merely to satisfy the minds but also to appeal to the hearts to accept the Faith. Therefore it does not merely put forward logical arguments in support of the truth of the Message and against the people's wrong notions, but at appropriate intervals it makes frequent use of sympathetic and earnest appeals to win over their hearts by warning them of the consequences of *kufr* and by holding out the happy rewards of Faith so that the foolish people should give up their obduracy.

Besides this, the objections of the opponents have been answered without any mention of them, and those doubts which are proving a hindrance in the way of the Message or were being created by the opponents have been removed. At the same time, the Believers, who had been passing through a long and hard ordeal and were feeling tired, and waiting anxiously for Allah's succour, have been comforted and filled with hope and courage.



الَّتِي تِلْكَ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ وَالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ

XIII

AR-RA'AD الرَّعْدُ

Verses : 43

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Alif. Lām. Mīm. Rā. These are the verses of the Divine Book, and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the very truth, but most (of your) people do not believe in this¹.

1. This is the introduction to this Sūrah, in which its aim and object has been enunciated in a few words. Allah has addressed the Holy Prophet to this effect : "O Prophet ! most of your people are rejecting the teachings of the Qurān for one reason or the other, but the fact is that what We are sending down to you is the Truth whether people believe it or not."

After this brief introduction, the discourse deals with the main subject of the Sūrah, which consists of three basic things. First, "The whole of the universe belongs to Allah alone, and none besides Him has any right to service and worship". Second, "There is another life after this life, in which you shall have to render an account of all your actions." Third, "I am a Messenger of Allah : whatever I am presenting before you is not from myself but from Allah." As the people were rejecting these three things, these have been reiterated over and over again in various forms to remove doubts and objections from the minds of the disbelievers.

النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ
 اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ط
 يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ
 الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الشَّجَرِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ
 اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَفِي
 الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُّتَجَوِّرَاتٌ وَجُدَّتْ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ
 صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُقِضَلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنَّ فِي
 ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ إِذَا كُنَّا ثُرْبًا
 ءَاتَانَا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ؕ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ؕ وَأُولَئِكَ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي
 أَعْنَاقِهِمْ ؕ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ
 بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلُطَّةُ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو
 مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ ظُلْمِهِمْ ؕ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٥﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ؕ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿١٦﴾
 اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحِيلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ
 شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿١٧﴾ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿١٨﴾ سَوَاءٌ
 مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسَرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ
 بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٩﴾ لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ
 سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ؕ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَاٍلٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ

It is Allah Who raised up the heavens without such 2
pillars as you could see:² then He sat Himself upon the
Throne of His Kingdom:³ He subjected the sun and the moon
to a law.⁴ Everything in the universe is running its course to
its fixed term.⁵ And Allah alone is directing the whole
affair. He makes His Signs plain:⁶ perhaps you may be
convinced of meeting your Lord.⁷

And it is He Who has spread out the earth, and fixed the 3
immovable mountains in it, and made the rivers flow on it.
He has created in pairs every kind of fruit, and He covers
the day with the veil of night.⁸ Surely there are great Signs
in these for those who reflect upon them.

And behold! there are different regions on the earth 4
close to one another;⁹ there are vineyards, corn fields and
groves of date-palm with single or double trunk.¹⁰ All are
irrigated with the same water, but We make some more taste-
ful than others. Most surely there are many Signs in all
these things for those who use their common sense.¹¹

Now, if there is anything for you to marvel at, you should 5
marvel at their saying: "What! when we have become dust,
shall we then be raised to a new life again?" These are the
people who have denied their Lord:¹² they are those who
shall have collars around their necks:¹³ they shall be the
dwellers of Hell and therein they shall dwell for ever.

They demand from you the hastening of evil rather than 6
good,¹⁴ though indeed there have been instances of exemplary
punishments before them (of the wrath of God on the people
who adopted the same attitude.) The fact is that your Lord
shows forbearance to the people despite their transgressions,
and it is also the fact that your Lord is stern in retribution.

These people who have rejected your Message, say, "Why 7
has no Sign been sent down to this person from His Lord?"¹⁵
—You are a warner only and every people has its guide.¹⁶

Allah knows what every female bears in her womb: He 8-19
is fully aware of what is taking shape in the womb and also
what decrease or increase occurs therein.¹⁷ Everything has its
fixed measure with Him. He has perfect knowledge both of
the visible and the invisible. He is the Great and the Supreme
Being. Alike to Him are all of you, whether one of you

whispers or speaks aloud or one hides oneself under the cover of the darkness of night or walks about in the broad day light. For each person has guardians before him and behind him, who watch over him by Allah's command.¹⁸ The fact is that Allah does not change a people's lot unless they themselves change their own characteristics: and when Allah decides to bring about retribution to a people, none can ward it off, nor can they find any defender or helper against Allah.¹⁹

2. In other words, "Allah keeps the myriads of heavenly bodies in space without any visible and perceptible support." Though there is nothing apparent and visible that is supporting these bodies, yet there is an invariable and imperceptible Power which is not only holding and keeping each and everyone of these huge bodies including the earth we inhabit in their proper places and orbits but also does not let any collision take place between them.

3. For the fuller details of "He sat Himself on the Throne of His Kingdom," please refer to E.N. 41 of AL-A'ARĀF. Here the purpose will be served if it is understood that this thing has been mentioned in the Qurān at many places in order to bring out clearly the fact that Allah has not only created the earth, but also rules over His Kingdom, and that His universe is a factory that is not working automatically as some ignorant people seem to think nor is it being ruled by many gods as other ignorant people seem to believe. But it is a regular system that is being run and ruled over by its Creator.

4. It should be noted here that the addressees themselves accepted the truth of all the claims that have been made in this verse. Therefore no proofs were required of the facts that it is Allah Who raised up the heavens without any visible support and subjected the sun and the moon to a fixed order. These things have been mentioned here only as arguments to prove that Allah is the sole Sovereign and ruler of the whole universe.

Now let us consider this question: How can such an argument as this convince those who do not believe at all in the existence of God nor acknowledge that He is the Creator of the universe and the Director of all its affairs? The answer is that the arguments in support of the Doctrine of *Tauhid* advanced in the Qurān to convince the *mushriks* equally apply against the atheists to prove the existence of God. It is like this: The whole of the universe—the earth, the moon, the sun and the countless heavenly bodies—constitute a perfect system which is working under the same all-powerful Law. This is a proof that such a system must have been designed by some All-Powerful Sovereign, Who possesses wisdom and unerring knowledge. This proves conclusively the existence of that Allah Who has no other equal nor associate nor partner. For there can be no system without an administrator, no law without a ruler,

no wisdom without a sage, and no knowledge without the possessor of that knowledge. Above all, no one can ever conceive that there can be any creation without a Creator except the one who is obdurate or has no sense left in him at all.

5. This system is not only a standing proof of the fact that an All-Powerful Sovereign is ruling over it, but is also an evidence of the great wisdom underlying it; it also bears witness that there is nothing ever-lasting in it. Everything in it remains for a fixed term after which it comes to an end. This is equally true for each and every component part of it as well as for the whole system. It is quite evident from its physical structure that there is nothing ever-lasting and immortal. There must be some fixed term for the system as a whole, after the expiry of which it shall come to an end. Then there shall be another world : therefore it is most likely that there shall be Resurrection as predicted in the Qurān : nay, its inevitability is beyond any doubt.

6. Allah makes plain those Signs which help prove the truth of what the Holy Prophet was informing them. These Signs are spread all over the universe and everyone who observes these with open eyes can perceive that the realities towards which the Qurān invites the people are testified by these Signs.

7. The preceding Signs have been cited to prove two things. First, the universe has only one Creator and Administrator. Second, there shall be life in the Hereafter in which everyone shall be judged in the Divine Court and awarded rewards and punishments on merit. As the first thing was quite obvious, it has not been mentioned in the conclusion drawn from the Signs. But the second thing, life in the Hereafter, has been mentioned because that was rather hidden from perception. Therefore it has specifically been stated that these Signs have been made plain in order "to convince you that you shall meet your Lord in the Hereafter and render an account of all your actions in this world."

Now let us consider how these Signs help prove life in the Hereafter. These make it evident in two ways :

(1) When we consider how big heavenly bodies as the sun and the moon are completely subject to the will of Allah, our hearts feel convinced that Allah Who has created these things and regulated their movements so orderly around their orbits, has undoubtedly the power to bring to life the whole human race after its death.

(2) The terrestrial system also proves that its Creator is All-Wise. Therefore it can never be imagined that the All-Wise Creator could have created man and endowed him with wisdom and intelligence and invested him with power and authority, and then left him free to do what he liked with these, without being responsible and accountable for their use or abuse. For His Wisdom demands that He should take full account of all the acts and deeds of man in this world. It requires that He should take to task those who committed aggressions and compensate their

victims and He should give rewards to those who practised virtue and punishments to those who did wicked deeds. In short, His Wisdom requires that He should call to account every human being and demand : "How did you carry out the trust that was placed in your hands in the shape of your wonderful body with its wonderful faculties and the numerous resources of the earth?" It may be that a foolish and unjust ruler of this world might entrust the affairs of his kingdom in the hands of his agents and then forget to call them to account, but such a thing can never be expected from the All-Wise and All-Knowing Allah.

It is this way of observing and considering the heavenly bodies that can convince us that life in the Hereafter is both possible and inevitable.

8. After citing some heavenly Signs in support of the doctrines of *Tauhid* and the Hereafter, a few Signs are being cited from the earth for the same purpose. Briefly the following are the arguments for *Tauhid*, Resurrection and Accountability :

(1) *Tauhid*: The fact that the earth is closely connected with the heavenly bodies (which help create life on it), and the fact that the mountains and the rivers are so inter-related with that life are clear proofs that all these things have not been created by separate and different gods nor are being governed by gods with independent powers and authorities. Had it been so, there could not have been so much harmony, congruity, accord and unity of purpose among them; nor could these relationships have continued for such a long time. For it is quite obvious that if there had not been One All-Powerful and All-Wise Allah, it could not have been possible and practicable for different gods to sit together and evolve out such a harmonious system of the universe without any discord or conflict between its myriads of bodies.

(2) *Resurrection*: This wonderful planet, the earth, is itself a great proof that its Creator is All-Powerful and can, therefore, raise the dead whenever He will. For it is floating in space round the sun and it has high mountains fixed in it and has large rivers flowing on its surface : it produces countless fruit-bearing trees and it brings about the cycles of the day and the night with precise regularity.

All these things bear witness to the boundless power of its Creator. It would, therefore, be sheer folly to doubt that such All-Powerful Creator is incapable of raising mankind to life after death.

(3) *Accountability*: The earth, with all its wonderful and purposeful signs, is a clear evidence of the fact that its Creator is All-Wise. Therefore it cannot even be imagined that He has created man, His noblest creation, without any purpose. Just as His wisdom is apparent from the structure of the earth, its mountains, its rivers, the pairs of its trees and fruits, its night and day, so it is quite obvious that it has not been made the habitation of man without any purpose, nor will it be brought to nought without the fulfilment of that purpose. Clearly mankind shall be accountable to its Creator for the fulfilment of that Divine purpose.

9. That is, "If you observe carefully, you will find Divine wisdom, design and purpose in the diversity of the structure of the earth. Though it has countless regions adjoining one another, they are different from one another in their shapes, colours, component parts, characteristics, potentialities, productive capacity and source of minerals. This diversity has countless points of wisdom and advantage. Let alone other creatures, if we consider the diversity of regions from the point of the good it has done to mankind, we shall have to acknowledge that this is the result of the well-thought and well-planned design of the All-Wise Creator. For this diversity has helped the growth of human civilization so much that only an unreasonable person can assign this to mere accident.

10. Some of the date-palm trees have only a single trunk from the root while others have two or more stems from the same root.

11. The things mentioned in this verse contain many other Signs besides the proofs of *Tauhid* and the boundless powers and All-Comprehensive Wisdom of Allah. Let us consider one of these, that is the diversity in the universe, including mankind. There is the one and the same earth but all its regions are quite different from one another. Then there is one and the same water but it helps to produce different kinds of corn and fruits. Then one and the same tree bears fruits which, in spite of likeness, differ from one another in shapes, sizes, and other features. Then there is one and the same root from which sometimes one and at others two trunks sprout up, with their own different characteristics. If one considers these aspects of diversity, one shall come to the conclusion that the Divine wisdom demands the same kind of diversity in the natures, temperaments and inclinations of human beings, and, therefore, in their conducts. So, one need not worry about the existence of this diversity. As it has been stated in v. 31, if Allah had willed, He could have created all human beings alike and virtuous by birth. But the wisdom that underlies the creation of the universe, including mankind, requires diversity and not uniformity. Otherwise, all this creation would have become meaningless.

12. They "have denied their Lord": their denial of the Hereafter is, in fact, the denial of the Power and Wisdom of Allah. As they say that it is impossible to bring them again to life after their death, it implies that, God forbid, their Allah Who has created them lacks not only power but wisdom, too.

13. As a collar around the neck is a symbol of imprisonment, the words "collars around their necks" have been used here idiomatically to show that they are slaves of ignorance, obduracy, lust and are blind followers of their forefathers. As their thinking is influenced by their prejudices, they cannot believe in the Hereafter and would deny this, though there is every reason to believe that it is inevitable.

14. This refers to the demand of the Quraish from the Holy Prophet:

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الْبَرَقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ۝ وَيَسْجُرُ الرِّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَ
 الْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ ۝ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ
 فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْحَالِ ۝ لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ
 دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كَبَاسِطٍ كَفَيْهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَهُ فَاهُ وَمَا
 هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ ۝ وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكٰفِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ ۝ وَ لِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظَلَلَهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْأَصَالِ ۝ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ قُلْ اللَّهُ ۝ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ
 نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ ۝ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ
 وَالنُّورُ ۝ أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۝ قُلْ اللَّهُ
 خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ۝ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أوديةً
 بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا ۝ وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ
 حُلِيٍّ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ ۝ كَذَلِكَ يُضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۝ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ
 فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۝ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُتُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۝ كَذَلِكَ يُضْرِبُ اللَّهُ
 الْأَمْثَالَ ۝ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ الْحُسْنَى ۝ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ
 لَهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ ۝ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ
 وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۝ وَيَسَّ الْبِهَادُ ۝ أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
 الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَى ۝ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۝ الَّذِينَ يُؤْفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ
 وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْبَيْتَاقَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَ
 يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ

وقف النبي
 عليه السلام

اع ٢

It is He Who makes the lightning flash before you to fill you both with fear and with hope: it is He Who produces clouds laden with water. The thunder glorifies Him with His praise²⁰ and the angels, too, glorify Him in awe of Him.²¹ He lets loose thunderbolts and (often) smites with them whomsoever He wills, while they are wrangling about Allah. The fact is that His plan is very effective.²² 12-13

To invoke Him alone is the right thing.²³ As regards the other deities whom they invoke apart from Him, they cannot give any answer to their prayers. It is as if a man were to stretch his hands towards water and ask it to come to his mouth, when it cannot reach his mouth in this way; likewise the prayers of the disbelievers are nothing but aimless efforts. For it is Allah alone before Whom everything in the heavens and the earth bows down willingly or un-willingly,²⁴ and the shadows of all things bow down before Him in the morning and the evening.²⁵ 14-15

Ask them, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?"—Say, "Allah".²⁶ Then say to them, "When this is the fact, have you then made beside Him such deities your protectors as can do neither good nor harm even to themselves?" Say, "Are the blind man and the seeing man alike?²⁷ Are light and darkness alike?"²⁸ And if it is not so, have the partners, they have set up with Allah, created anything like His creation so as to make the matter of creation doubtful for them?²⁹—Say, Allah alone is the Creator of everything; and He is the Unique, the Almighty.³⁰ 16

Allah sent down water from the sky and every system carried it along according to its capacity: then there was flood and a swelling foam³¹ came to the surface. Likewise there arises a scum out of the metals which are melted in the furnace for making ornaments and utensils.³² By such similitudes, Allah makes the truth distinct from falsehood. That which is the foam vanishes and that which is beneficial for the people remains on the earth. In this way Allah cites similes to make His Message clear. 17

There is an excellent reward for those who responded to the call of their Lord. As for those who rejected His call, they would willingly give for their ransom all the wealth the 18

earth contained, if they possessed it, and as much more besides (in order to escape retribution).³³ Those are the people who shall have the heavy reckoning;³⁴ their abode shall be Hell—a wretched resting place.

19-21 Well, how can the one who believes that this Book which has been sent down to you from your Lord, is the Truth, be like the one who is blind to this fact?³⁵ It is the wise people alone who take advice from this:³⁶ they fulfil their Covenant with Allah, and break it not after confirming it.³⁷ They join together what Allah has bidden to join:³⁸ they fear their Lord and dread lest they should be called upon to render a heavy reckoning.

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“If you are a true Prophet of God, why don't you hasten to bring that scourge of God on us of which you have been threatening us, when we are flouting and denying you?” They did this in different ways. Sometimes they would invoke God mockingly and say, “O Lord, settle our accounts now and do not postpone these to the Day of Resurrection”. At another time, they would say, “Our Lord, if what Muhammad says be true, and be from Thee, then stone us from the sky or send down some other scourge upon us from the sky or send down some other painful torment upon us.” In this verse an answer has been given to such impudent demands of the disbelievers. They have been admonished to refrain from such foolish demands, and avail of the respite that was being given to them and mend their ways, for they were incurring the wrath of God by adopting the attitude of rebellion.

15. This showed their mentality. The only criterion of judging whether Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was a true Prophet or not according to these disbelievers, was whether he would perform a miracle to order. This was because they would not judge his Message by rational arguments : they would not learn a lesson from his high character nor from the moral revolution that was being brought about among his Companions by his Message and noble example: nor would they carefully consider the rational arguments given in the Qurān to prove the errors of their religion of *shirk* and superstitions of ignorance. They would ignore these rational things and demand a miracle to decide the issue.

16. This is the concise answer to their demand, though it has not been directly addressed to the disbelievers but to the Messenger. It is this : “O Prophet, you should not worry at all about some miracle which you might show to these people in order to convince them, for it is not a part of your Mission. Your duty is only to warn the people of their negligence

and of the evil consequences of their wrong ways. And for this purpose, We have always sent a guide to every people. Now you, too, are performing this duty, and it is for them to open their eyes and judge the truth of your Message." After giving this concise answer, Allah overlooks their demand but warns them, in the succeeding verses, that they have to deal with the All-Knowing Allah Who has full knowledge about everyone of them from the time they were in the wombs of their mothers, and Who keeps a keen watch over everything they do. Therefore their fates shall be decided strictly with justice in accordance with their merits and that there is no power on the earth and in the heavens that can influence in the least His decisions and judgements.

17. When amplified the verse will mean : Allah remains fully aware of all the developments that take place in the child while in its mother's womb, and He watches over the decrease or increase in each of its limbs, and its potentialities, capabilities and powers.

18. That is, "Allah not only directly watches over whatever each person does, and is fully aware of everything he does, but He has also appointed such Guardians as accompany him everywhere and keep a full record of all his deeds." This has been stated here to warn those people who live their lives under the delusion that they have been left absolutely free to do whatever they like and shall not be required to render an account of what they did in this worldly life. The warning is that such people invite their own retribution.

19. This is to warn them further that they should not remain under any delusion that some holy person or saint or angel has the power to rescue them from Divine Retribution, for there is none who could defend them against Allah, even though they might have been paying homages and making offerings to their so-called patrons and protectors in the hope that they would rescue them from punishment from Allah on the Day of Judgement.

20. The thunder is a proclamation of *Tauhid* for those who have ears to hear the real meaning of its loud noise which follows the flash of lightning, though it is merely a kind of noise for those who hear it like animals. For it proclaims that that Allah Who raises clouds from the oceans and carries them wherever He wills, and makes the lightning flash from the clouds and then turns them into rain so as to supply water to the dwellers of the earth, is perfect and worthy of all praise, is All-Wise and All-Powerful and is flawless in every respect and has no partner whatsoever.

21. The mention of the fact that the angels are filled with awe of their Lord, and they proclaim His praise has a special significance here. This is to refute the *shirk* of the ignorant people who have always worshipped the angels as gods and deities and believed them to be partners with God in His Godhead. It has been stated that they are not partners with Allah but His most obedient servants; so much so that they praise

Him and are filled with awe of Him.

22. He has countless plans and measures which are so effective and sudden that He can smite any one with any one of them from any side He will. So much so that the intended victim is absolutely unaware of it. This is a proof that those people, who say absurd things about such All-Powerful Being, are absolutely void of sense.

23. "To invoke Him alone is the right thing," for Allah alone has the power and the authority to give help and remove difficulties.

24. "... everything in the heavens and the earth bows down before Allah" in the same sense that every creation of His has to obey and submit to His Physical Law in every detail. The only difference between the submission of a Believer and an unbeliever is that the former submits to it with a willing heart while the latter is forced to do so against his will, for it is absolutely beyond his power to oppose it.

25. "The shadows bow down" in the sense that they fall to the west in the morning and to the east in the evening and so on. This shows that they, too, have to submit to some Law.

26. It will be worth while to note that though the question, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" was put to the disbelievers, Allah told the Holy Prophet to answer it himself and say, "Allah". This was because the disbelievers hesitated to answer it one way or the other. They could not say that it was not Allah for they themselves believed that Allah was the Creator of everything. On the other hand, they could not acknowledge this fact in so many words in answer to such question, for, they would, then, have to acknowledge the doctrine of *Tauhid* for no basis could have been left in favour of *shirk*. As they realised their weak position, they would not give any answer to such questions. That is why Allah asks His Messenger to put such questions to the disbelievers: "Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? Who is the Lord of the Universe? Who sustains you with provisions of life?" When they do not give any answer to such questions, Allah asks His Messenger to say "Allah" in answer. He then proceeds on with this argument: "When Allah does all these things, how do the deities you worship come in?"

27. The blind man is the person who cannot see any of the countless signs of the Oneness of Allah, though these lie spread over before him in the universe. On the other hand, the seeing man is the person who can see in every particle of the universe and in every leaf of grass and tree Signs pointing to their Creator. Thus the question that has been posed means: "O disbelievers! if you are blind to the Signs, why should the one who can see the Signs should behave like a blind man and stumble along like you?"

28. Here "light" means the light of the knowledge of the Truth which the Holy Prophet and his followers possessed. In contrast to this, there was the "darkness" of ignorance in which the disbelievers were wandering about. The question that has been posed means to ask this:

“Why should those, who have got the ‘light’, extinguish it and wander about in the darkness like you? Well, if you do not know the worth of the ‘light’, you may choose to wander in the darkness, but how can you expect the one who has got the ‘light’, who appreciates the difference between the light and the darkness, and who is seeing the right way as if in broad daylight, to leave the light and wander about in the darkness?”

29. The question is intended to impress on the disbelievers that there is absolutely no reason why they should practise *shirk*. When they themselves admit that their gods did not create even an iota in the universe and that they have not even the smallest and most insignificant share in the creation, there remains no ground for them to cherish any doubts about it. Why should, then, their false gods and deities share the rights and powers of the Real Creator?

30. The Arabic word *قَاهِرٌ* (*Qah-hār*) literally means “the one who rules over all by virtue of one’s own power, and keeps all under one’s complete control.”

This fact that “He is the Unique, the Almighty” follows naturally from the preceding fact that “Allah alone is the Creator of everything,” for this fact was also acknowledged by the *mushriks* and was never denied by them. This is so because the Creator of everything should logically be Unique, and every other thing or being must necessarily be His creation. Therefore nothing could be the equal of the Creator or partner in His Being, attributes, powers and rights. Likewise, the Creator must have complete power and control over His Creation. For it can never be imagined that the Creator would create anything over which He has not full control. Therefore, the one who acknowledges Allah to be the Creator must also acknowledge Him to be the Unique and the All-Powerful. After this, there remains no reason why one should worship any one other than the Creator or invoke some one else for help in resolving one’s difficulties and fulfilling one’s needs.

31. In this simile the Knowledge which had been sent down by Allah to the Holy Prophet has been likened to the rain from the sky, and the Believers to the streams, rivulets and rivers. Just as the streams etc., fill themselves with rain-water, each according to its capacity, so his followers gained knowledge from him, each according to his ability. On the other hand, the hue and cry that was raised by the opponents of the Islamic Movement has been likened to the swelling foam etc., that begins to dance about on the surface of flood water, but soon vanishes away.

32. As it is but natural that scum should appear on the surface when metals are melted in the furnace for purification, likewise bad people would come to the surface and take prominent part in persecuting the good people who are passed through the furnace of persecution for their purification.

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رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرءُونَ
 بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾ جَعَلْتُ عَدِينَ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ
 صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ
 كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
 يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن
 يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٢٥﴾
 اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۗ وَفَرِحُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ
 الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تَوَلَّىٰ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ
 مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي ۗ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾ الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾ الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ وَحَسُنَ مَا فِي كِتَابِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي
 أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لَتَتْلُوا عَلَيْهَا الذِّكْرَ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ
 يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ
 مَتَابٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كَلِمَةٌ
 بِهِ السَّوآتُ ۗ بَلْ يَلَهُ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَأْتِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ
 اللَّهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوا
 قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا
 يُخْلِفُ الْوَعْدَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَىٰ بِرُسُلٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 ثُمَّ أَخَذْتَهُمْ ۗ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣١﴾ أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا

They show fortitude to win the approval of their Lord.³⁹ 22-25
 They establish *Ṣalāt* and expend openly and secretly out of what We have bestowed upon them and ward off evil with good.⁴⁰ Their's shall be the abode of the Hereafter : Gardens wherein they will live for ever. They will enter into them along with the righteous from among their forefathers, wives and descendants. The angels will come to welcome them from every side, saying, "Peace be upon you."⁴¹ You have won this blessing because of what you steadfastly endured in the world." How blessed is this abode of the Hereafter! As for those who break their Covenant with Allah after confirming it, who cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined, and spread chaos on the earth, their's shall be the curse, and they shall have a wretched abode in the Hereafter.

Allah gives abundantly His provisions to whom He will and sparingly to whom He pleases.⁴² These people are wholly absorbed in the joys of this life, whereas the life of this world is but a paltry thing as compared with the life of the Hereafter. 26

Those people who have rejected (Muhammad as a Prophet) say, "Why has no Sign been sent down to him from his Lord?"⁴³— Say, "Allah leads astray whom He will; and He leads to Himself only those who turn to Him."⁴⁴ Such are the people who have accepted (the Message of this Prophet,) and their hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Note it well that it is Allah's remembrance alone that brings comfort to hearts. Blessed are those who have accepted the Message and done righteous deeds: they have a good end. 27-29

O Muhammad! We have sent you as a Messenger in this way⁴⁵ among a people before whom many peoples have passed away so that you should recite to them the Message which We have sent down to you; yet they are rejecting the most Compassionate Lord.⁴⁶ Say to them, "My Lord is He: there is no deity but He: I have placed my full trust in Him and He is my sole Resort." 30

And what (do you think) would have been the result, if We had sent a *Qurān* that would have caused the mountains to move or cleft the earth asunder or made the dead speak?⁴⁷ (It is not difficult at all to show such Signs) for Allah has 31-32

full power over everything.⁴⁸ Have the Believers (still any expectations of a Sign in answer to the demand of the disbelievers and) not given up all hope, (knowing) that Allah could have guided all mankind aright,⁴⁹ if He had so desired? As for the disbelievers, because of their misdeeds, one affliction or the other does not cease to visit them every now and then, or come near their home. It will go on like this until Allah's threat come to pass. Indeed, Allah does not fail to bring about His threat. Other Messengers have also been mocked before you, but I have always given respite to the disbelievers and then seized upon them at its end. Just see how terrible had been My Scourge!

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33. This shows that the disbelievers would be in such a sad plight that they would not hesitate to give their all for their redemption.

34. "... they shall have the heavy reckoning": they shall have to bear the full consequences of their evil deeds. No sin, no shortcoming, in short, nothing will be forgiven and no evil shall go un-punished.

We learn from the Qurān that the rebels of Allah shall have to render a heavy reckoning, whereas there shall be a "light" reckoning from those who have been faithful and obedient to their Lord. In consideration of their loyal services, their cases will be dealt with leniently, and taking their general goodness into account many of their shortcomings will be forgiven.

This is further amplified by a Tradition of the Holy Prophet. Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah relates, "I said, O Messenger of Allah! the most dreadful verse of the Qurān is this: 'Whoso shall commit an evil, he shall be punished for it'. (IV: 123). The Holy Prophet answered, 'O 'Ā'ishah! don't you know how Allah clears the accounts of His faithful and obedient servant? Whatever harm or trouble he receives in this world—even so much as the pricking of a thorn—is taken by Allah as atonement for one or the other of his sins. As regards the Hereafter, everyone, who shall be called upon to render an account of any sin, shall be punished for it'. At this Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah asked, 'Then what is meant by light reckoning in this verse: 'Whoso shall be given his 'Conduct Register' in his right hand, he will render a light reckoning'?' (LXXXIV: 7-8). The Holy Prophet answered, 'This means merely the presentation of his whole conduct, that is, all his deeds—good and bad—shall be presented before Allah but he shall not be called upon to clear the account of all his deeds; for the one who shall be called upon to clear the whole of his account, shall be totally ruined'."

The same thing is happening even in this world. A master deals very leniently with his faithful and obedient servant and connives at his minor faults and even forgives his major faults in consideration of his

meritorious services. On the other hand, if a servant is proved to be treacherous and dishonest, no consideration is given even to his services, and he is punished both for his minor and for major faults.

35. That is, "As the attitude of the two in this world will be different from each other, so shall be their ultimate end in the Hereafter."

36. That is, "Those who listen to the Message that has been sent down by Allah, and accept His Messenger, are really very wise people. This is why their conduct in this world is quite different from those foolish people who are blind to its merits : and so is their ultimate end in the Hereafter, as stated in the subsequent verses".

37. This Covenant is the same that was made by Allah with the whole of mankind at the beginning of the creation that they would worship Him alone. (Please refer to E.N.'s 134 and 135 of AL-A'ARĀF). As this Covenant has been made with every human being, it has been imbued firmly in human nature. When a human being is born in this world, he, so to say, confirms the same Covenant because he owes his creation to the same Allah with Whom he had made that Covenant : then he is brought up by His Providence and fed and nourished with His Provisions, and uses the powers and faculties endowed by Him. All these things bind him by themselves into a covenant of bondage with his Lord. It is obvious that wise, loyal and faithful people fulfil their Covenant and dare not break it except that they might break it unconsciously and unwittingly.

38. That is, "All those social and civil relations that are conducive to the correct and right conduct of collective human life."

39. "They show fortitude": they remain self-possessed and keep under control all their desires and lusts and do not transgress the bounds, and they do not yield to temptations to disobey their Lord in order to gain advantages and gratify their desires : nay, they bear with calm courage and endurance losses and afflictions that are inevitable in the obedience of Allah. If we consider the life of a believer from this point of view, we shall find that the whole of his life is the life of endurance and fortitude, for he keeps himself under control in very trying circumstances in this world in the hope of winning the approval of his Lord and in the expectation of gaining permanent benefits in the Hereafter : so he fights with fortitude every temptation to sin.

40. That is, "If others do evil to them, they do not do evil in return but do good instead : they do not fight mischief with mischief but with virtue. Howsoever unjust one may be to them, they do justice in every case. Likewise, they remain truthful and honest even in the case of those who tell lies against them and show dishonesty towards them."

There is a Tradition of the Holy Prophet to the same effect : "You should not imitate others in your conduct towards other people, for it is wrong to say, 'We will do goodness to others, if they do goodness to us and we will do injustice to them if they are unjust to us.' (On the other hand,) you should follow this principle : if others do goodness to you,

you should do goodness to them, but if they do evil to you, you should not be unjust to them'."

There is another Tradition, which begins with the words.: "My Lord has bidden me to do nine things. Four of these things are, 'I should behave justly towards everyone whether I am pleased or offended with him. I should render the right even of the one who violates my rights. I should pay the dues even of the one who deprives me of my due. I should forgive the one who has been unjust to me'." There is yet another Tradition to the same effect : "Don't be faithless even to the one who has been faithless to you." There is also a saying of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar that amounts to the same thing. "The best way of punishing the one, who does not fear God in his dealings with you, is that you should fear God in your dealings with him."

41. This implies two things. The angels will come in large numbers from every side and give them this good news : "Now you have come to a place where there is peace for you. Here you are immune from every affliction, every trouble, every hardship, and every danger and worry." (For details please see E.N. 29 of AL-HIJR).

42. This verse refutes the wrong criterion by which the disbelievers of Makkah (and all other foolish people of the world) judged whether one was or was not a favourite of God. They judged a man's worth by his wealth and worldly prosperity and not by his faith and righteous conduct. They thought that the one who was enjoying all the good things of life was a favourite of God, even if he had erroneous beliefs and did wicked deeds. On the other hand, they considered the one who was poor and indigent to be under the wrath of God, even though he was righteous. That is why in their judgement the chiefs of the Quraish were far superior to the followers of the Holy Prophet. They would say, "You can see for yourselves that God is with the chiefs of the Quraish."

In this verse, Allah has warned them that they are absolutely wrong in drawing such a conclusion from the worldly conditions of the people. Allah gives His provision to the people abundantly or sparingly for reasons different from those which they presumed and richness or poverty is no criterion by which to judge the worth of people. The real criterion of judging the worth of people is their beliefs and deeds. The one, who has righteous beliefs and does good deeds, shall be higher in rank than the one who has wrong beliefs and does evil deeds. Thus the real criterion is the quality of one's deeds and not the possession or the lack of wealth.

43. Please also keep in view the answer that has been given to this question in v. 7.

44. This is the answer to their question. It is not due to the lack of signs that they were going astray, but it is the lack of any desire in them to seek right guidance. For Allah does not force one to follow the Right Way, if he deliberately turns away from it. He lets such persons wander on the wrong ways they choose to wander. Nay, even all those things

that should serve as a means to guidance for a seeker of truth, become the means of deviation for the one who seeks deviation. So much so that that very torch which helps show the way to the former, dazzles the eyes of the latter. This is how Allah leads astray a person.

This answer to the demand of a Sign is matchless in its eloquence. It says to them, "O foolish people ! it is not due to the lack of Signs that you are not finding the right path, but it is due to the lack of any desire in you for it. You do not see any of the countless Signs that lie scattered all around you because you have no desire to go to the Right Way. How can then any Sign be helpful to you? For you would not see any of those Signs. However, those who seek the Right Way to Allah, see these Signs and find the Right Way with their help."

45. That is, "In this way that We have not given you a Sign they demanded."

46. That is, "Instead of serving that most Compassionate Lord, they are discarding His service and setting up other partners in His attributes, powers, rights and giving thanks to others for His blessings."

47. This verse has been addressed to the Believers who were feeling uneasy that no such Sign was being sent as was demanded by the disbelievers. They thought that such a Sign would convince the disbelievers and they would accept Islam. Therefore when no such Sign was sent, they became all the more uneasy for the lack of the fulfilment of the demand that gave rise to doubts about the Prophethood of the Messenger. The question posed in this verse is meant to remove that uneasiness of the Muslims. It is like this: "Do you think that they would have embraced Islam if such and such Signs had been shown to them all of a sudden along with a Sūrah of the Qurān? Are you under the delusion that they are quite ready to accept Islam and are waiting only for such a Sign? Do you think that those people who have failed to see the light of the Truth in the teachings of the Qurān, in the phenomena of the universe, in the pure and spotless life of the Holy Prophet and in the wonderful change in the lives of his Companions, would see the light of the Truth in the moving of the mountains, in the cleavage of the earth and in the coming out of the dead from the graves?"

48. "Allah has full power over everything" and can show any Sign if He so desires. He is not showing any Sign for it does not fit in the scheme laid down for the guidance of Man. As the real object is to show Guidance to mankind through the Prophet and not to compel them to believe in the Prophethood of a Prophet, He desires that the people should gain guidance by thinking and observing wisely and not by seeing Signs.

49. That is, "If the object had been to make human beings Believers even without consciously understanding it, Allah could have created them Believers by birth."

كَسَبَتْ ۗ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۗ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ ۗ أَمْ تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ أَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ۗ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَصُدُّوا
 عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ ۗ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
 الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ ۗ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَّاقٍ ۗ مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ
 الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۗ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۗ أُكْلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا ۗ
 تِلْكَ أُجُوبَةُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعُقُوبَةُ الْكَافِرِينَ ۗ النَّارُ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمْ
 الْكِتَابَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ ۗ مَنْ يُنْكِرْ بَعْضَهُ ۗ قُلْ
 إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا أُشْرِكَ بِهِ ۗ إِلَيْهِ أَدْعُوا وَإِلَيْهِ مَأْبٍ ۗ
 وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ۗ وَلَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ
 مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ۗ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ
 قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا
 بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ لِكُلِّ آجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ۗ يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ ۗ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ
 الْكِتَابِ ۗ وَإِنْ مَا نُرِيكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ
 الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ۗ أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا
 وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعْتَبَرٍ لِحُكْمِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ۗ وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ
 مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَبِيئًا ۗ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ۗ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكُفْرُ
 لِمَنْ عُقُبَى الدَّارِ ۗ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ۗ قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ

شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ۗ

What! are they (so audacious that they are) setting up 33-35
 partners with Him, Who is watching minutely over the actions
 of each and every soul?^{50, 51} O Prophet, say to them, "(If God
 has Himself set them up as His partners) just tell me their
 names. Do you mean to inform Him of something new that
 He Himself is unaware of on His earth? Or do you merely
 utter empty words?⁵² Indeed for those, who rejected the
 Message, their fraud⁵³ has been made to appear fair to them
 and they have been debarred from the Right Way;⁵⁴ and there
 is none to show the Right Way to those whom Allah lets go
 astray. There is a torment for them in the life of this world but
 the torment in the Hereafter is still more painful; and there
 is none to protect them from Allah. As regards the Paradise
 which the God-fearing have been promised, it is like this :
 canals flow beneath it, its fruits are eternal, and its shade is
 perpetual. Such is the reward of the righteous, but the
 reward of the disbelievers is the fire of Hell.

O Prophet! some of those people whom We gave the 36-37
 Book before you, rejoice in the Book We have sent down to
 you, while there are others among the different sections who
 reject some of the things contained in this. Tell them plainly,
 "I have been commanded to worship Allah alone, and pro-
 hibited from setting up a partner with him. Therefore I
 invite you to Him and myself turn to Him."⁵⁵ It is with this
 instruction that We have sent this Command in Arabic to
 you. Now if you follow the desires and lusts of the people in
 spite of the knowledge you have received, there shall be none
 to defend you nor to protect you against Allah.

We have sent many Messengers before you, and We 38-39
 assigned to them also wives and children:⁵⁶ and no Messenger
 had the power to show any Sign without the sanction of
 Allah.⁵⁷ Every age had its Book: Allah abrogates whatever
 He pleases and keeps intact whatever He wills and He has the
 Original Book⁵⁸ with Him.

And O Prophet! rest assured that We will carry out the 40-42
 threat We are holding out to them, whether a part of it should
 happen during your lifetime, or We should cause you to die
 before its fulfilment. Anyhow, your duty is only to convey
 the Message and it is for Us to do the reckoning.⁵⁹ Do these

people not see how We are advancing in the land and shrinking its boundaries (for them) on all sides?⁶⁰ Allah rules and there is none to revise His decrees, and He is swift at His reckoning. Indeed, those who went before them also devised schemes,⁶¹ but the decisive plan is wholly in the hand of Allah. He knows what every soul earns, and the disbelievers will soon come to know who will have a good end.

43. These disbelievers say, "You are not a Messenger of Allah." Say, "Allah suffices for a witness between me and you, and every such person who has the knowledge of the Book."⁶²

50. That is, "They are so audacious that they set up partners with Allah Whose knowledge is All-Comprehensive and Who is aware of even the minutest details of the good and bad actions of each individual. . ."

51. These are the audacious things they do. They ascribe partners and equals to Him : they believe that some of His creatures are a part and parcel of His Being, and have attributes and rights like Him: they presume that they shall not be called to account for whatever they do, even though they live in His Kingdom.

52. That is, "You give empty names to the partners you ascribe to Him for you have no real knowledge about them". For you could get this knowledge only in one of the three following ways :—

First, You might have received some authentic information that Allah had made such and such people as His partners in His attributes, powers and rights. If it is so, please let us also know their names and the source of your information.

The second possibility is that Allah might have remained ignorant that some beings have become His partners. Therefore you are going to inform Him about this. If it is so, please say it clearly in so many words so that it may be decided whether there are some foolish people who can believe in such a nonsensical claim.

Obviously the above two suppositions are absurd. Therefore the only alternative is that, "You are ascribing partners to Him without any rhyme or reason, and you without any knowledge make one the relative of God, another the hearer of supplications, and still another the helper and fulfiller of certain needs and the ruler of a certain region etc. etc."

53. *Shirk* has been called "fraud" because none of the angels, spirits, saints, heavenly bodies, to whom they ascribe Divine attributes and powers or render Divine rights, ever claimed to possess these attributes or powers, nor did they ever demand these rights from the people nor told the people that they would fulfil their desires and wants, if they would perform some rituals of worship before them. As a matter of fact, some clever people invented these gods in order to practise wilful deception and

dishonesty so that they might wield powerful influence over the common people and exploit them and deprive them of a part of their hard earned possessions. Accordingly, they made the common people credulous followers of the gods of their inventions and set themselves up as their representatives to get money, etc., from them by this fraud.

The second reason why *shirk* has been called "fraud" is that a worldly man pretends to believe in it not because he wants to believe in it but in order to free himself from all moral restraints to enable him to lead an irresponsible life of greed and lust.

The third reason is given below in E.N. 54.

54. *Shirk* is also 'fraud' in the sense that it has been made to appear fair for them and so leads them into deviation and prevents them from coming back to the Right Way. It is like this: When *mushriks* adopt wrong ways of deviation that suit the kind of lives they wish to lead, they have to invent arguments to pacify their consciences and convince other people that they are on the right way. Naturally this fraud confirms them on the way of deviation and they are debarred from the Right Way.

55. This is in reply to a specific objection which was then raised by the disbelievers. They would say, "If he has brought the same Message that was brought by the Messengers before him (as he claims), why don't the Jews and the Christians who are the followers of the former Prophets, come forward and welcome it?" The verse answers the objection and says that the true followers of the former Prophets really rejoice in the Message of the Qurān, but the false ones have been offended at it. Then it asks the Holy Prophet not to worry at all about this, saying, "O Prophet, you should not mind at all whether they are pleased or offended at it. Tell them plainly that this is the Guidance I have received from my Lord and I will follow it at all costs."

56. This is the answer to another objection. The disbelievers said that he could not be a Prophet of Allah because he had wives and children, for they argued that Prophets had nothing to do with carnal desires.

57. This is the answer to yet another objection: "Had he been a true Prophet, he would have shown a Sign like the shining hand and the miraculous staff of Prophet Moses or he would have restored sight to the blind or cured lepers like Prophet Jesus, or brought a Sign like the she-camel of Prophet Ṣāliḥ". The answer is this: "None of the former Messengers had any power to show any Sign nor has this Prophet: Allah showed a Sign whenever and through whomsoever He considered it to be necessary and will show any Sign whenever He will consider it necessary, and that I have not claimed to possess any such power that such a demand might be made from me."

58. This is the answer to another objection raised against the Revelation of the Qurān. The disbelievers said, "What was the need of this new Book, when there already existed the former revealed Books? You say that this need has arisen because the former Books have been

tampered with; therefore Allah has abrogated them and commanded that this new Book should be followed. This position you have taken is wrong for how can any one tamper with the Book of Allah and how is it possible that any Book of Allah might be tampered with? Why did not Allah protect these Books from such things as these? You say that this Book has been revealed by the same Allah Who revealed the Torah and the Gospel. How is it then that your way is different from that of the Torah? You consider certain things lawful while they are unlawful according to the Torah, etc. etc.” Detailed answers to these objections have been given in other Sūrahs but here only a brief and comprehensive answer has been given to them.

The Arabic word **أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ** (*Umm-ul-Kitāb*) literally means “the Mother Book”, that is, the Original Book which is the Source and Origin of all the revealed Books.

59. This is to console the Holy Prophet, as if to say, “O Prophet, you need not concern yourself as to the end of these disbelievers who have rejected the Truth. You should go on performing with peace of mind the Mission that has been entrusted to you and leave it to Us to give them suitable punishment.” Though this has been addressed to the Holy Prophet, it is obvious that it is really meant to warn the opponents of the Truth, who were demanding definitely from the Holy Prophet by way of a challenge to bring about the scourge about which threats were being held out to them.

60. “. . . . We are advancing in the land” : this is a very subtle way of warning the opponents of the Truth : “The fact that Our Message is spreading fast in Arabia does, in fact, mean that We Ourselves are advancing very fast in the country against you for We are with those who are carrying Our Message.”

“. We are shrinking its boundaries for them” : “We are causing the influence of Islam to spread fast in the land and are thus reducing the boundaries of the influence of its opponents. Are not these things the portents of their coming disaster?”

61. That is, “These people, who are now devising schemes to defeat the Message of the Truth, do not take a lesson from the sad end of the people who devised similar schemes before them to suppress the voice of the Truth by falsehood, fraud and persecution.”

62. That is, “Everyone who has the knowledge of the Divinely revealed Books will bear witness to the fact that my teachings are the same that were imparted by the former Prophets.”