

THE MEANING OF THE QUR'ĀN

Vol. VIII

(Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn to Ash-Shu'arāa)
(ARABIC TEXT WITH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY)

By
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THE 100th YEAR

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PREFACE

This volume of *The Meaning of the Qur'ān* is being presented in continuation of the late Ch. Muḥammad Akbar's work of rendering the *Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān* into English. With the publication of Vol. VII, which ended with Sūrah Al-Ḥajj, his main work has already gone into print. I have ventured to present this volume, which also contains some fragments of his work, only in pursuance of his wish and will. I do hope that the learned reader will not mind sending me suggestions for the improvement of this modest attempt.

I am deeply indebted to a number of friends who have ungrudgingly gone through parts of the manuscript, and to Maryam Jameela Begum in particular, who has gone through most of it, and made some really valuable suggestions. However, I alone am responsible for any errors and mistakes that may still be found in the book.

I am also grateful to Messrs Ashfāque Mirzā, 'Abdul Waheed Khan and Moḥsin Fārooq of the Islamic Publications, Ltd., who have taken keen interest in the publication of this book.

'Abdul'Azīz Kamāl

XXIII

Al-Mu'minun

XXIII

AL-MU'MINŪN المؤمنون

INTRODUCTION

Name. The Sūrah takes its name, Al-Mu'minūn, from the first verse.

Period of Revelation. Both its style and theme indicate that it was revealed during the middle stage of Prophethood at Makkah. Reading between the lines, one feels that a bitter conflict had begun between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers of Makkah, though the persecution by them had not yet become tyrannical. It appears that the Sūrah was sent down during the climax of the "Famine" in Makkah (vv. 75-76), which according to authentic traditions occurred during the middle stage of Prophethood. Moreover, according to a tradition related by 'Urwah bin Zubair, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar who had embraced Islam by that time, said, "This Sūrah was revealed in my presence and I myself observed the state of the Holy Prophet during its revelation. When the revelation ended, the Holy Prophet remarked, 'On this occasion ten such verses have been sent down to me that the one who measures up to them, will most surely go to Paradise'. Then he recited the initial verses of the Sūrah." (Aḥmad, Tirmizi, Nasā'i, Ḥākim).

Theme and Topics. The central theme of the Sūrah is to invite the people to accept and follow the Message of the Holy Prophet and the whole Sūrah revolves round this theme.

SUMMARY

The fact that the people who have accepted the Message 1-11 of the Holy Prophet have started acquiring such and such noble qualities of character is a practical proof of the truth of the Message.

12-22 In this passage, attention has been drawn to the creation of man and the universe to impress that the whole universe including man's own self, is a clear proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet's Message, which invites the people to accept *Tauhīd* and life in the Hereafter.

23-54 Then the stories of the former Prophets and their communities have been cited as historical evidences of the truth of the Message. They prove the following things :

(a) The objections and the doubts that the antagonists are raising against the Message of Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) are not new. These were raised against the former Prophets also whom they themselves acknowledged as Messengers of Allah. Therefore they should learn a lesson from their history and judge for themselves whether the Prophets were in the right or their objectors.

(b) The Message of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter that Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is conveying is the same as was brought by the former Prophets; therefore they should accept it.

(c) They should take a warning from the consequences met by those communities who rejected the Message of their Prophets.

(d) All the Prophets brought one and the same religion from Allah and they all belonged to one and the same community. All other religions were invented by the people themselves and none of them is from Allah.

55-67 After relating the stories of the Prophets, a fundamental principle has been enunciated: Success and prosperity in the worldly life is not a criterion of success in the sight of Allah. If some persons (or a person) are enjoying prosperity, wealth, power and the like in this world, it does not mean that they are the favourites of Allah. Likewise, the poverty and adversity of other people is not a proof that Allah is displeased with them. The real criterion is Faith (or lack of it) and piety (or lack of it). This declaration was needed because the antagonists of the Holy Prophet were the great chiefs of Makkah, who (and their followers) were deluded by their own prosperity that God and their deities were well pleased with them. On the other hand, they argued, the fact that

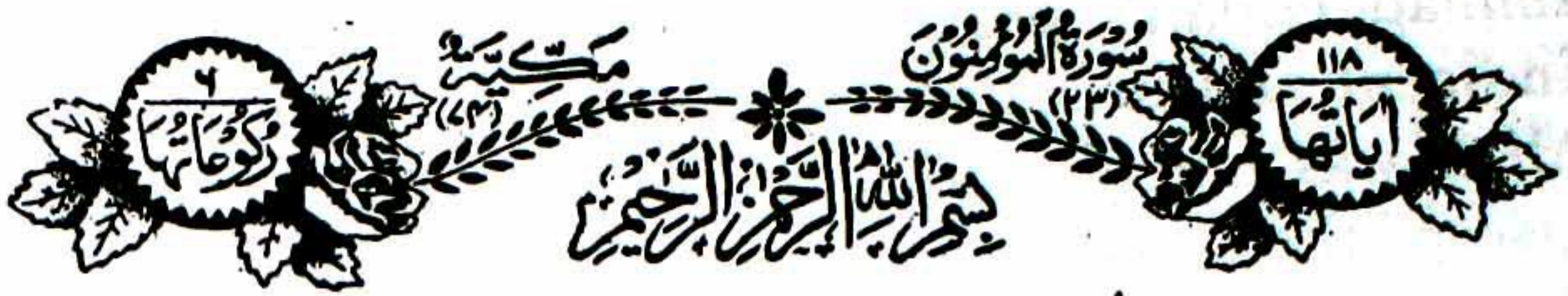
Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and his followers were indigent and in a state of helplessness, was a clear proof that Allah was not pleased with them, and they were under the curse of their deities.

In this passage different arguments have been used to convince them that Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was a true Prophet of Allah. Then they have been told that the Famine (vv. 75-76) was merely a warning and therefore "it is better for you to mend your ways; otherwise you will be visited by a terrible scourge." 68-77

Again they have been invited to observe the Signs in the universe and in their own selves because these are clear proofs of the truth of the Message of the Holy Prophet. 78-95

The Holy Prophet has been told not to adopt any wrong way in retaliation to counteract the evil ways of the enemies, and to guard against the incitement of Satan. 96-97

In this concluding passage, the enemies of the truth have been warned that they shall have to render an account in the Hereafter and bear the consequences of their persecution of the Believers; therefore they should mend their ways. 98-118



قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشِعُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ

هُم عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
 لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ
 غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
 هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾
 أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ
 لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢٩﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ
 مَكِينٍ ﴿١٣٠﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ
 عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ﴿١٣١﴾ ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ
 الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾
 وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾
 وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنَتْهُ فِي الْآرِضِ طَائِفَاتٌ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ
 بِهِ لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ فَأَنْشَأْنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ جَنَّتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ لَّكُمْ
 فِيهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ
 تَنْبُتُ بِالذُّهْنِ وَصَبِغٍ لِللَّاكِلِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً
 نُّسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

الجزء ١٨

وقد لازم

وقد لازم

XXIII

AL-MU'MINŪN المؤمنون

Verses: 118

Revealed at Makkah

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

Most certainly those Believers have attained true success,¹ 1-11
who² perform their Ṣalāt with humility:³ who refrain from vain
things:⁴ who spend their Zakāt dues in appropriate ways:⁵
who guard their private parts scrupulously,⁶ except with regard
to their wives and those women who are legally in their pos-
session, for in that case they shall not be blame-worthy, but
those, who go beyond this (in lust for sexual desires), shall be
transgressors:⁷ who are true to their trusts and their promises:⁸
and who strictly guard their Prayers.⁹ These are the heirs
who will inherit Paradise¹⁰ and dwell therein for ever.¹¹

We created man from an essence of clay: then turned 12-16
him into a sperm-drop in a safe place: then changed the sperm-
drop into a clot of blood and the clot into a piece of flesh:
then turned the piece of flesh into bones: then clothed the
bones with flesh:¹² and then brought him forth as quite a
different creation (from the embryo).¹³ So blessed is Allah,
the best of all creators.¹⁴ Then after this you shall all die:
then most surely you shall be raised up on the Day of Resur-
rection.

And We have made seven paths above you:¹⁵ We 17-20
were not novice in the art of creation.¹⁶ And We sent down
rain from the sky in due measure and lodged it in the earth:¹⁷
and We are able to take it away as We will.¹⁸ Then with that
rain We caused vine-yards and palm-groves to spring up. In
those gardens there are delicious fruits¹⁹ from which you
obtain sustenance.²⁰ And We created the tree which grows
on Mount Sinai:²¹ it gives oil and is used as food also by those
who like to eat it.

In fact, there is a lesson for you in the cattle: We give 21-22
you as a drink of that which is in their bellies,²² and besides

this you get other benefits from them: you eat their flesh and are carried from place to place on them and on ships.²³

1. "Believers", who have attained true success, are those who have accepted the Message of Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and have acknowledged him as their guide and followed the way of life taught by him.

This assertion cannot be fully appreciated unless one keeps in view the background in which it was made. On the one hand, there were the well-to-do and prosperous chiefs of Makkah, the opponents of Islam, whose business was thriving and who were enjoying every good thing of life, and on the other hand, there were the followers of Islam majority of whom were either poor from the beginning, or had been reduced to poverty by ruthless antagonism to Islam. Therefore, the assertion, "Most certainly the Believers have attained true success", with which the discourse begins, was meant to tell the disbelievers that the criterion of success and failure that they had in mind was not correct. It was based on misconceptions besides being transitory and limited in nature : it led to failure and not true success. On the contrary, the followers of Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him), whom they regarded as failures, were truly successful, because by accepting the invitation to the Right Guidance given by the Messenger of Allah, they had struck a bargain which would lead them to true success and everlasting bliss in this world as well as in the Hereafter, whereas by rejecting the Message the opponents had incurred loss and would meet with the evil consequences both in this world and in the next.

This is the main theme of the Sūrah and the whole discourse, from the beginning to the end, is meant to impress the same.

2. The noble characteristics of the Believers pointed out in vv. 2-9 are the arguments to prove the above assertion. In other words, it has been stated that people with such and such traits and qualities only can attain true success in this world and in the Hereafter.

3. *Khāshī'ūn* in the Text is from *khushū'* (to bow down, to express humility) which is a condition of the heart as well as of the body. *Khushū'* of the heart is to fear and stand in awe of a powerful person, and *khushū'* of the body is to bow one's head and lower one's gaze and voice in his presence. In *Ṣalāt* one is required to show *khushū'* both of the heart and of the body, and this is the essence of the Prayer. It has been reported that when the Holy Prophet once saw a person offering his Prayer as well as playing with his beard, he remarked : "Had he *khushū'* in his heart, his body would have manifested it."

Though *khushū'* is actually a condition of the heart, as stated by the above tradition, it is manifested by the body as a matter of course. The *Sharī'ah* has enjoined certain etiquette which, on the one hand, helps produce *khushū'* in the heart, and on the other, helps sustain the physical act of the Prayer in spite of the fluctuating condition of the heart. According

to this etiquette, one should neither turn to the right or left, nor raise one's head to look up : one may, however, look around from the corner of the eye, but as far as possible, one must fix the gaze on the place where the forehead would rest in prostration ; one is also forbidden to shift about, incline side ways, fold the garments or shake off dust from them. It is also forbidden that while going down for prostration, one should clean the place where one would sit or perform prostration. Similarly it is disrespectful that one should stand stiffly erect, recite the verses of the Qur'ān in a loud resounding voice, or sing them, or belch or yawn repeatedly and noisily. It has also not been approved that one should offer the Prayer in a hurry. The injunction is that each article of the Prayer should be performed in perfect peace and tranquillity, and unless one article has been completely performed, the next should not be begun. If one feels hurt by something during the Prayer, one may cast it aside by one hand, but moving the hand repeatedly or using both the hands for the purpose is prohibited.

Along with this etiquette of the body, it is also important that one should avoid thinking irrelevant things during the Prayer. If thoughts come to the mind without one's intention, it is a natural human weakness, but one should try one's utmost that the mind and heart are wholly turned towards Allah, and the mind is in full harmony and tune with the tongue, and as soon as one becomes conscious of irrelevant thoughts one should immediately turn the attention to the Prayer.

4. Literally, *laghv* is anything nonsensical, meaningless and vain, which is in no way conducive to achieving one's goal and purpose in life. The Believers pay no heed to such useless things and they show no inclination or interest for them. If by chance they see such things being indulged in, they keep away and avoid them scrupulously, or treat them with utmost indifference. This attitude has been described in Al-Furqān (XXV) : 72, thus : "... if they have to pass by what is vain, they pass by like dignified people."

This is indeed one of the outstanding characteristics of the Believer. He is a person who feels the burden of responsibility at all times ; he regards the world as a place of test, and the life as the limited time allowed for the test. This feeling makes him behave seriously and responsibly throughout life just like the student who is taking an examination paper with his whole mind and body and soul absorbed in it. Just as the student knows and feels that each moment of the limited time at his disposal is important and decisive for his future life, and is not inclined to waste it, so the Believer also spends each moment of his life on works which are useful and productive in their ultimate results. So much so that even in matters of recreation and sport, he makes a choice of only those things which prepare him for higher ends in life and do not result in mere wastage of time. For him time is not something to be killed but used profitably and productively.

Besides this, the Believer is a person who possesses a right thinking

mind, pure nature and fine taste : he has no inclination to indecent things : he can talk useful and healthy things but cannot indulge in idle talk : he has a fine taste of humour, but is not given to jesting, joking, ridicule, etc. nor can he endure dirty jokes and fun. For him a society in which the ears are never immune from abusive language, back-biting, slander, lying, dirty songs and indecent talk is a source of torture and agony. A characteristic of the promised Paradise is : “. . . therein you will not hear anything vain or useless.”

5. The word *Zakāt* literally means purification and development—to help something grow up smoothly and develop without obstruction. As an Islamic term, it implies both the portion of wealth taken out for the purpose of purifying the rest of wealth and the act of purification itself. The words of the original Text mean that the Believer constantly practises purification. Thus the meaning is not confined to the paying off of *Zakāt* dues only but it is extended to self-purification which includes purification of morals as well as wealth, property and life in general. Then it does not mean purification of one's own self, but includes the purification of the lives of other people as well. So the verse means : “The Believers are the people who purify themselves as well as others.” This thing has been stated at other places in the Qur'ān also, for instance : “Successful is he who practised purification and remembered his Lord and prayed.” (LXXXVII : 14-15), and : “Successful is he who purified himself and failure is he who corrupted it.” (XCI : 9-10). But this verse is more comprehensive in meaning because it stresses the purification of both society and one's own person.

6. They are modest in every sense of the word. They are free from sex abuse and sex perversion. They are so modest that they even conceal those parts of their bodies which the Law forbids to expose before others. For explanation, see E.N.'s 30 and 32 of An-Nūr (XXIV).

7. This is a parenthesis which is meant to remove the common misunderstanding that sex desire is an evil thing in itself and satisfying it even in lawful ways is not desirable, particularly for the righteous and godly people. This misunderstanding would have been strengthened had it been only said that the Believers guard their private parts scrupulously, because it would have implied that they live unmarried lives, away from the world, like monks and hermits. Therefore a parenthesis has been added to say that there is nothing wrong in satisfying the sex desire in lawful ways. What is evil is that one should transgress the prescribed limits for satisfying the sex desire.

Here are briefly a few injunctions which are based on this parenthetical clause :

(1) Two categories of women have been excluded from the general command of guarding the private parts : (a) wives, (b) women who are legally in one's possession, *i.e.* slave-girls. Thus the verse clearly lays down the law that one is allowed to have sexual relations with one's slave-girl as with one's wife, the basis being possession and not marriage. If marriage

had been the condition, the slave-girl also would have been included among the wives, and there was no need to mention them separately. Some modern commentators, who dispute the permissibility of having sexual relations with the slave-girl, argue from An-Nisā' (IV) : 25 to prove that one can have sexual relations with a slave-girl only after entering wedlock with her, because that verse enjoins that if a person cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, he may marry a Muslim slave-girl. But these commentators have a strange characteristic : they accept a part of a verse if it suits them, but conveniently ignore another part of the same verse if it goes against their wish and whim. The law about marrying the slave-girls as enunciated in IV : 25 reads : "... you may marry them with the permission of their guardians and give them their fair dowries." Obviously the person under reference here is not the master of the slave-girl himself but the person who cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, and therefore wants to marry a slave-girl, who is in the possession of another person. For if the question had been of marrying one's own slave-girl, who would then be the "guardian" whose permission would have to be sought? Then, the interpretation they give of this verse contradicts other verses dealing with the same subject in the Qur'ān. A sincere person who wants to understand the Quranic law in this regard should study An-Nisā (IV) : 3, 25 ; Al-Aḥzāb (XXXIII) : 50, 52, and Al-Ma'ārij (LXX) : 30 together with this verse of Al-Mu'minūn. (For further explanation, see E.N. 44 of An-Nisā).

(2) The law prescribed in the parenthesis is only applicable to men as is clear from the Text. A woman in the time of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar did not understand this fine point of the language and indulged in sexual gratification with her slave. When her case was brought before the consultative body of the Companions, they gave the unanimous decision : "She misinterpreted the Book of Allah." Nobody should entertain the doubt that if this exception is meant for the men only, how could then the husbands become lawful for the wives ? This doubt is unjustified because when the husbands are exempted from the command of guarding their private parts in regard to their wives, the wives automatically stand exempted from the command with regard to their husbands, and there is no need to grant them exemption separately. Thus the command of exemption remains applicable and effective only in respect of the man and the woman legally in his possession, and the slave becomes unlawful for the woman possessing him. The wisdom of why the slave has been forbidden to the woman is that he can only satisfy her sexual desire but cannot become guardian and governor of herself and her household, which leaves a serious flaw in the family life.

(3) The sentence "... but those who go beyond this (in lust for sexual desire), shall be transgressors" has made satisfaction of sex desire in other ways unlawful, whether it be through fornication, homosexuality, sex gratification with animals, or some other means. The jurists differ only with regard to masturbation. Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal regards it as lawful, but Imāms Mālik and Shāfi'ī regard it as absolutely unlawful ; and

though the Hanafites also regard it as unlawful, they give the opinion that if a person indulges sometimes in masturbation under the fit of passion, it is expected that he will be forgiven the error.

(4) Some commentators have proved the prohibition of *Mut'ah* (temporary marriage) from this verse. They argue that the woman with whom one has entered into wedlock temporarily, can neither be regarded as a wife nor a slave-girl. A slave-girl obviously she is not, and she is also not a wife, because the legal injunctions normally applicable to the wife are not applicable to her. She neither inherits the man nor the man her; she is neither governed by the law pertaining to *'Iddah* (waiting-period after divorce or death of husband), divorce, subsistence, nor by that pertaining to the vow by man that he will not have conjugal relations with her, false accusation, etc. She is also excluded from the prescribed limit of four wives. Thus, when she is neither a "wife" nor a "slave-girl" in any sense, she will naturally be included among those "beyond this", whose seeker has been declared a "transgressor" by the Qur'ān.

This is a strong argument but due to a weakness in it, it is difficult to say that this verse is decisive with regard to the prohibition of *Mut'ah*. The fact is that the Holy Prophet enjoined the final and absolute prohibition of *Mut'ah* in the year of the conquest of Makkah, but before it *Mut'ah* was allowed according to several authentic traditions. If *Mut'ah* had been prohibited in this verse, which was admittedly revealed at Makkah, several years before the migration, how can it be imagined that the Holy Prophet kept the prohibition in abeyance till the conquest of Makkah? The correct position therefore is that prohibition of *Mut'ah* is not based on any express law of the Qur'ān but is based on the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet. Had it not been prohibited by the *Sunnah*, it would have been difficult to declare it as prohibited only on the authority of this verse.

It would be worth-while to clarify two other points in connection with *Mut'ah* :

(a) Its prohibition is based on the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet and therefore it is wrong to say that it was prohibited by Ḥaḍrat 'Umar. As a matter of fact, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar only enforced it as a law of Islam and publicised it among the people. This had not been done earlier because the Holy Prophet had forbidden *Mut'ah* only during the latter part of his worldly life.

(b) The Shi'ite view that *Mut'ah* is absolutely lawful and permissible has no sanction and support in the Qur'ān or *Sunnah*. The fact is that a few of the Companions, their followers and jurists who regarded it permissible in the early days of Islam, did so only in case of extreme necessity and need. None of them held the view that it was absolutely lawful like marriage and could be practised in normal circumstances. Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, who is generally cited as a prominent supporter of the view of permissibility, has himself explained his position thus : "It is just like carrion which is lawful for a person only in extreme necessity." Even Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās had to revise his opinion when he saw that people were

abusing permissibility and had started practising *Mut'ah* freely regardless of genuine need and necessity. . Again, even if the question, whether Ḥadrat Ibn 'Abbās and the few like-minded jurists had revised their opinion or not, is ignored, the fact is that the supporters of *Mut'ah* allow it only in case of extreme necessity. Holding *Mut'ah* as absolutely permissible, practising it without any real necessity, or resorting to it even when one has a legally wedded wife or wives is a kind of licence which is abhorred by good taste, much less it be attributed to the *Sharī'ah* of Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and imputed to the learned jurists of his family. I think that among the Shi'ite Muslims themselves no respectable person would like that somebody should ask for the hand of his daughter or sister not in marriage but for the purpose of *Mut'ah*. For if *Mut'ah* is held as absolutely permissible, it would imply that there should exist in society a low class of women, like the prostitutes, who should be available for the purpose as and when required, or if not that, *Mut'ah* be restricted to the daughters and sisters of the poor stratum of society and the well-to-do be given the freedom and right to exploit them as and when they like. Can such an injustice and discrimination be expected of the Divine Law? And will Allah and His Messenger permit an act which every respectable woman would regard not only disgraceful for herself but shameful, too ?

8. The Believers fulfil the terms of the trusts which are placed in their charge. In this connection it should be noted that the Arabic word *amānāt* is very comprehensive and includes all those trusts which are placed in their charge by Allah or society or individuals. Likewise *'ahd* includes all those compacts, pledges, and promises which are made between Allah and man, and man and man. The Holy Prophet himself used to impress the importance of the fulfilment of pledges in his addresses : "The one, who does not fulfil the terms of his trust, has no Faith, and the one, who does not keep promises and pledges has no Islam." (Baihaqī) According to a Tradition reported both by Bukhārī and Muslim, he said : "Four characteristics are such that if a person has all the four in him, he is beyond any doubt a hypocrite, and the one who has one of these, is a hypocrite to that extent till he gives it up :

(a) When something is placed in his trust, he commits breach of the trust, (b) when he speaks, he tells a lie, (c) when he makes a promise, he breaks it, and, (d) when he has a quarrel with somebody, he exceeds all limits (of decency and morality)."

9. *Ṣalawāt* is plural of *Ṣalāt*. In verse 2 the act of *Ṣalāt* itself was implied, but here the plural number implies the individual Prayers offered in their own times. "They strictly guard their Prayers": they strictly adhere to the prescribed times of the Prayers : they perform them with due regard for their pre-requisites, conditions and articles with clean body and dress and necessary ablutions : they do not regard their Prayers as an unnecessary burden, which has to be cast off somehow : they do not recite mechanically but understand what they recite and are conscious that they are supplicating

their Lord like humble servants.

10. *Firdaus* (Paradise) is a common word found in almost all human languages in very nearly similar forms. It means a vast garden adjoining the dwelling of a person and enclosed by defence walls and containing all kinds of fruit trees, especially vines. In some languages, the word has the sense of containing pet birds and animals, too. *Firdaus* was in common use in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. The Qur'ān, however, has used it for a plurality of gardens as in Al-Kahf (XVIII) : 107. This gives the idea that *Firdaus* is a vast place containing a great number of gardens, vineyards, etc.

The inheritance of Paradise by Believers has been explained in detail in E.N. 83 of Sūrah Ṭā Hā (XX) and E.N. 99 of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' (XXI).

11. The substance of this passage may be summed up in four parts for the further understanding of the Sūrah :

(1) The above-mentioned excellent qualities of the Believers are not confined to any race, nation or country.

(2) These excellences can be attained only by sincere Faith and excellent moral qualities, and by the observance of prescribed laws in all the aspects of life.

(3) True success is not confined to transitory worldly and material prosperity but it comprises both success in this life and in the life after death in the Hereafter, and is attained by sincere Faith and righteous deeds. This is a fundamental principle which cannot be falsified either by the worldly "success" of the evil-doers or by the temporary "failure" of the righteous people.

(4) Let us reiterate that these excellent characteristics of the Believers have been presented as a practical proof of the truth of the Message of the Holy Prophet, for these were the result of its acceptance. This should be kept in mind in the study of the succeeding passages, wherein the same subject has been pursued from different angles. This will also help to show the connection between this and the succeeding passages.

12. For explanation see E.N.'s 5, 6 and 9 of Sūrah Hajj (XXII).

13. Now let the disbelievers consider the Message of the Holy Prophet by observing their own creation, for this will convince them of its truth by proving its doctrine of *Tauhid*. The origin of man is from a mere inanimate sperm-drop, which undergoes several changes in the womb of the mother. But after this, when it sees the light of the day, it is quite a different creation from the embryo in the womb. Now it can hear, it can see, and in due course of time it can talk and think. Then, when he reaches adulthood and maturity, he is capable of performing wonderful deeds. It is obvious that Allah alone could create all these characteristics in an inanimate sperm-drop.

14. The various stages of the creation of man have been cited to prove that Allah is All-Blessed and there is no human language which can describe the praise of which He is worthy, as if to say, "That Allah Who is able to develop an essence of clay into a perfect man, does not have any partner in His Godhead. Moreover, He has the power to raise him up again after his

death, and is capable of working even greater wonders.”

15. The original Arabic word *ṭarā'iq* has more than one meaning. It may refer to the paths of the seven planets, with which the man of the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān was familiar, or to the seven heavens. It should be noted that this word has not been used as a modern scientific term, but as a common word according to the Arabic usage of the period in order to invite the people's attention to the wonders of the heavens, whose creation is certainly a greater thing than the creation of men. (XL : 57).

16. This may also be translated as : “We were not nor are heedless of Our creation.” According to the first translation, it will mean that the whole of the creation has been brought about in a perfect manner with a definite design and purpose, for Allah—their Creator—is perfect in every respect. The creation itself is a proof that it is not the work of a novice or an in-expert. All the physical laws of the entire system of the universe are so closely interconnected as to prove that it is the creation of the All-Wise Allah. If we take the second translation, it will mean that Allah has not been heedless in making provisions for every thing according to its nature from the most insignificant to the greatest of all.

17. The “rain” may refer to the rainfall, which comes down every now and then. It may also refer to the great store of water which Allah sent down at the time of the creation of the earth to fulfil its various needs till the Last Day, and which still exists in the shape of seas, lakes, sub-soil water, etc. It is the same water which evaporates in summer and freezes in winter and is carried by winds from place to place and spread over the earth by rivers, springs and wells to cause the growth of multitudes of things, and then is again restored to the seas, lakes, etc. Neither has this store of water been decreased by a drop nor was there any need to increase it by a drop since its creation. Today it is too well known how water comes about by the combination of oxygen and hydrogen in a certain ratio. The question is why can't more water be produced when oxygen and hydrogen still exist in abundance in the world ? Who caused them to combine in the proper ratio in the beginning to produce oceans of water and who now stops them from coming together to produce an extra drop ? Then when water evaporates, who causes oxygen and hydrogen to remain combined in water vapours even in the gaseous state. Have the atheists and polytheists, who believe in independent deities for water, air, summer and winter, any answer to this question ?

18. This is to warn that Allah is able to take away the water if He so wills, and deprive the world of its most important means of life. Thus, this verse is more comprehensive in meaning than verse 30 of Sūrah Al-Mulk (LXVII) :

“Ask them : Have you ever considered that if the water of your wells should sink down into the earth, who would then restore to you running springs of water ?”

19. That is, other kinds of fruits than dates and grapes.

[*Contd. on p. 16*]

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ
 يٰ قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُوا
 الدِّينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ لَا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ
 عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً ۚ مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٨﴾
 إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يَهْدِيهِ جَنَّتُهُ فَتَرَبَّصُوا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
 انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَ
 وَحِينًا فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ
 اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي
 الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۗ إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى
 الْفُلْكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّيْنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقُلِ رَبِّ
 أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبْرَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ وَإِنْ
 كُنَّا لَبَتِلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا
 فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا
 تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ
 وَآثَرْتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ
 مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا
 لَخَيْرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ أَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ آيَاتُكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنْتُمْ مُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾
 مَهَيَّاتِ مَهَيَّاتِ لَهَا تُوَعَّدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا
 وَمَا نَحْنُ بِبَعْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا

We sent Noah to his people:²⁴ he said, "O my people, worship Allah alone; you have no other deity than Him. Are you not afraid (of *shirk*)?"²⁵ Those of the chiefs of his people, who had rejected his Message, said, "This person is no more than a human being like yourselves."²⁶ By this, he merely intends to obtain superiority over you.²⁷ Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels.^{27-a} Since the time of our forefathers we have never heard (that a human being came as a Messenger). Obviously this man is possessed: wait a little more: (may-be he is cured)". Noah prayed, "Lord, help me against these people for they have treated me as an impostor".²⁸ At this, We revealed to him: Build an ark under Our supervision, according to Our instructions. Then, when Our Command comes and "*at-Tannūr*"²⁹ begins to boil up, take aboard a pair of every species of animals, and also the members of your own family except those against whom the judgement has already been passed; and do not plead with Me for the workers of iniquity, for they are doomed to be drowned. Then, when you have boarded the ark along with your companions, say, "Praise be to Allah Who has delivered us from the wicked people",³⁰ and pray, "Lord, let my landing from this ark be at a blessed place, for Thou art the best of harbourers".³¹

There are many Signs in this story,³² and We always put people to the test.³³

After them We raised a people of another generation.³⁴ Then We sent to them a Messenger from among themselves, (who said,) "Worship Allah alone: you have no other deity than Him. Are you not afraid (of disbelief)?" Those of the chiefs of his people, who had rejected the Message and denied the life in the Hereafter and whom We had given prosperity in this worldly life,³⁵ said, "This person is no more than a human being like yourselves, for he eats of what you eat and drinks of what you drink. Now if you submit to a human being like yourselves, you shall indeed be losers.³⁶ What! does he tell you that after you are dead and turned into dust and become mere bones, you shall be brought out alive (from graves)? Impossible! Just impossible is that which you are being threatened with. There is no other life than this worldly life. We will live here and die here and will not be raised up

again. This man is merely an impostor, who is inventing lies in the name of Allah,^{36-a} and we are not going to believe in what he says”.

Contd. from p. 13]

20. That is, you sustain yourselves by the produce that you get from these gardens in the shape of fruit, corn, wood, etc.

21. That is, the olive-tree, which is the most important product of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. The olive tree can last for 2,000 years or so, so much so that some trees in Palestine are said to be existing since the time of Prophet Jesus. It has been attributed to Mount Sinai probably for the reason that the area whose well known and prominent place is Mount Sinai is its original habitat.

22. That is, milk. Refer to An-Naḥl (XVI) : 66 and E.N. 54 thereof.

23. The benefits of cattle as means of conveyance have been mentioned here along with the ships, because in Arabia, camel was used mainly for this purpose, and has been called “the ship of the desert” for the same reason.

24. See also Al-A‘arāf (VII) : 59-64, Yūnus (X) : 71-73, Hūd (XI) : 25-48, Banī Isra‘īl (XVII) : 3 and Al-Anbiyā’ (XXI) : 76-77.

25. That is, “Are you not afraid that if you set up partners and associates with Allah, Who is the real Sovereign, and worship and submit to them, you shall incur His wrath and punishment ?”

26. There has been a common deviation that “a human being cannot be a Prophet, and a Prophet cannot be a human being.” That is why the Qur’ān has refuted this wrong conception over and over again, and has stated forcefully that all the Prophets were human beings and that a human being only could be sent as a Prophet to human beings. For details, see Al-A‘arāf (VII) : 63, 69, Yūnus (X) : 2, Hūd (XI) : 27-31, Yūsuf (XII) : 109, Ar-Ra‘d (XIII) : 38, Ibrāhīm (XIV) : 10-11, An-Naḥl (XVI) : 43, Banī Isra‘īl (XVII) : 94-95, Al-Kahf (XVIII) : 110, Al-Anbiyā’ (XXI) : 3, 34, Al-Mu‘minūn (XXIII) : 33-34, 47, Al-Furqān (XXV) : 7, 20, Ash-Shu‘arā’ (XXVI) : 154, 186, Yā Sīn (XXXVI) : 15, Hā Mim Sajdah (XLI) : 6 along with the relevant E.N.’s.

27. This accusation is another old objection, which has always been raised against those who tried to reform their people. Their opponents always accused them of exploiting “religion” to gain domination in the land. Prophets Moses, Aaron and Jesus were accused of the same and so was Muḥammad (Allah’s peace be upon him). So much so that the disbelievers of Makkah offered to make the Holy Prophet their king, if he gave up his Message.

As a matter of fact, the people who exhaust themselves in pursuit of worldly benefits and gains, cannot believe that somebody in this world could also exert himself sincerely and selflessly for the sake of human welfare. They regard deceptive slogans, which they raise to capture power, and false promises, which they make day and night to bring about reforms as natural.

They think that sincerity and selflessness can be employed only to deceive people and these cannot be put to any better use. That is why the epithet of "power hungry" for the reformers in all ages has been used by those already in power as if their own power and domination in the land was their birth-right, and they were in no way blame-worthy for struggling for it and achieving it. (For further explanation, see E.N. 36 below).

In this connection, it should also be noted that all those, who try to reform the prevalent corrupt system of life, have inevitably to fight against those in power in order to establish the righteous system. That is why the powers that be, have always been against the Prophets and their followers, who had to dislodge the corrupt rulers. It is, however, obvious that there is a vast difference between those who want power to gain their own selfish ends and those who want it to reform their people.

27a. This is a clear proof of the fact that Noah's people were not disbelievers in the existence of God nor did they reject Him as Lord of the universe and the angels as His obedient servants. They were only guilty of *shirk*: they had set up other deities as partners in God's attributes and powers and rights.

28. "Help me against these people": "Take Thy vengeance on these people for they have denied me." Verse 10 of Al-Qamar (LIV) says: "Then cried Noah to his Lord, 'I am overcome, so take Thy vengeance on these people'," and verses 26-27 of Noah (LXXI) say: "And Noah said, 'O my Lord, do not leave of these disbelievers any dweller upon the earth, for if Thou sparest them, they will mislead Thy servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers'."

29. Some commentators think that *tannūr* means the earth; others take it for the highest part of the earth; and still others think that the words *fār-at-tannūr* in the Text have been used for the break of dawn. There are some who express the opinion that the words have been used metaphorically for the creation of turmoil. But in view of the context, we see no reason why one should take a far-fetched figurative meaning of a clear word of the Qur'ān. It appears that a particular oven (*tannūr*) had been ear-marked for the deluge to start from, which was to all appearances an unexpected origin of the doom of the wretched people.

30. The fact that Allah should be praised and thanked for the annihilation of those people, is a clear proof that they were the most wicked and villainous people in the world.

31. "Landing" here does not simply mean touching and resting on the land, but it also implies the sense of "hospitality", as if to say: "O God, now we are Thy guests and Thou alone art our Host."

32. At the conclusion of the story of Prophet Noah, particular attention has been drawn to the many Signs in the story from which one can learn many lessons. For instance, the Prophet who invited the people to *Tauhid* was in the right and those who practised and insisted on *shirk* and

نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ
 لَيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غَنَاءً فَبَعْدًا
 لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ
 أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا تَتْرَاهُمْ كُلَّمَا جَاءَ أُمَّةٌ
 رَسُولَهَا كَذَّبُوهُ فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ فَبَعْدًا لِقَوْمٍ
 لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى وَ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ ؕ بَايِعْنَا وَسُلْطِينَ مِثْمِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾
 إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَقَالُوا أَنْوَمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ
 مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عِيدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَقَدْ
 آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَ
 أَوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَ مَعِينٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ
 وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً
 وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلٌّ حِزْبٌ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ
 فِرْحُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ فَذَرَهُمْ فِي غَمَرَتِهِمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ ﴿٧١﴾ أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ
 بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَيْنٍ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ إِنَّ
 الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ
 يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا
 وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ أُولَئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ
 وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَلَا تَكِلْ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ
 بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمَرَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا وَ لَهُمْ

At this the Messenger prayed, "Lord, help me against these people, who have treated me as an impostor". In answer, it was said, "The time is nearing when they shall be remorseful". In due course a great scourge overwhelmed them in all justice and We cast them away like scum.³⁷—So away with the wicked people!

39-41

After them We raised other peoples. No people ceased to exist before its appointed term nor could any people outlive it. Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Whenever a Messenger came to his people, they treated him as an impostor: so We went on destroying one people after the other till We made them mere legends.—Accursed be those who do not believe.³⁸

42-44

Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our Signs and a clear Authority³⁹ to Pharaoh and his nobles. But they received them with arrogance, for they were very haughty people.⁴⁰ They said, "What! should we believe in these two men who are human beings like ourselves^{40-a} and whose people are our bondsmen?"⁴¹ So they treated them as impostors and incurred destruction.⁴² As regards Moses, We gave him the Book so that the people might be guided by it.

45-49

And We made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign⁴³ to mankind and We gave them shelter on a plateau where they could have peace, and which was watered by running springs.⁴⁴

50

O Messengers,⁴⁵ eat of pure things and do righteous deeds,⁴⁶ for I am fully aware of what you do. And you all belong to one and the same community, and I am your Lord: so fear Me.⁴⁷

51-52

Yet afterwards people divided themselves into different sects, and each sect rejoices in what it has.⁴⁸—Well, leave them deeply involved in their heedlessness up to an appointed term.⁴⁹

53-54

Do they think that, by continuing to provide them with wealth and children, We are solicitous for their welfare? Nay, they do not understand the reality of the matter.⁵⁰ Those who feel the fear of their Lord;⁵¹ who believe in the Signs of their Lord;⁵² who do not associate anyone with their Lord;⁵³ who give whatever they give, and whose hearts are filled with awe by the very idea that they shall have to return

55-63

to their Lord:⁵⁴ they indeed are the people, who work for their true welfare and try to be the first to attain it. We do not burden anyone with more than he can bear.⁵⁵ And We have a book which tells accurately (about everyone),⁵⁶ and the people will in no case be treated unjustly.⁵⁷ But these people are heedless of this,⁵⁸ and their deeds are also of a different nature (from those mentioned above).

Contd. from p. 17]

disbelief were in the wrong and were destroyed : that the same kind of conflict, which took place between Prophet Noah and his people, was going on in Makkah. Therefore, ultimately the Holy Prophet will come out victorious over his antagonists just like Prophet Noah.

33. This can also be translated as : "We had to or have to put people to the test." In each case the purpose is to warn the people that they will not be left alone after they have been granted power in the land and over good things of life, but Allah will put them to the test to see how they used their power. Whatever happened with the people of Noah was in accordance with this law, and the same will happen in future with any community which is raised to power.

34. The people of 'Ād, who were raised to power after the people of Noah. (Refer to Al-A'arāf : 69).

35. It should be noted that all those people who opposed the Messengers had three common characteristics : (1) They were the chiefs of their people. (2) They denied life in the "Hereafter". (3) They were prosperous in the worldly life. Obviously, they loved the life of this world and could never conceive that their way of life, which had made them chiefs and brought prosperity, could ever be wrong. Therefore they opposed their Messengers, who took away their peace of mind by preaching that there was a life-after-death and they shall have to render an account to Allah of what they did in this world. And this was exactly what was happening at Makkah.

36. Some commentators have wrongly opined that the chiefs exchanged these remarks against the Messenger between themselves. These remarks in fact were addressed to the common people. When the chiefs felt that the Message was spreading among the common people and there was a real danger that they would be influenced by the pure character of the Messenger and that their superiority then would automatically come to an end, they began to delude them by raising such objections against him. It is worth while to note that both the chiefs of the people of Noah and the chiefs of the people of 'Ād accused their Messengers of the "lust for power" but as regards themselves, they thought that power and prosperity were their inherent rights and they were in every respect entitled to be the chiefs of their people.

36a. These words show that the people of 'Ād too, were not disbelievers in the existence of God. They too were involved in the sin of *shirk*.

Refer to Al-A'araf (VII) : 70, Hūd (XI): 53-54, Hā Mīm Sajdah (XLI) : 14, and Al-Aḥqāf (XLVI) : 21-22.

37. Lexically, the word *ghuthā'* means the rubbish which is brought by flood waters and is deposited on the banks to rot there.

38. That is, "Those who do not believe in the Messengers."

39. The use of "a clear Authority" along with "Our Signs" may either mean that the "Signs" were a clear proof that they were Messengers of Allah, or the "Signs" may refer to all other miracles of Prophet Moses than the "staff", which may stand here for a clear Authority, because the miracles shown by means of it were a clear proof that the two brothers had been sent by Allah:

40. The words in the Text may either mean : (1) They were highly arrogant and tyrannous people, or (2) They showed haughtiness and self-conceit.

40a. For explanation, see E.N. 26.

41. *'Ābid* is worshipper. According to the Arabic usage, to be a "worshipper" and a "bondsman" are almost synonymous. Therefore when the Prophets invited their people to worship Allah alone, they wanted them to worship and serve and obey none but Allah, and that is the real significance of the word "*ibādat*". For further explanation, see E.N. 50 of Al-Kahf (XVIII).

42. For fuller details of the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh, see Al-Baqarah (II) : 49-50, Al-A'araf (VII) : 103-136, Yūnus (X) : 75-92, Hūd (XI) : 96-99, Banī Isra'īl (XVII) : 101-104, Ṭā Hā (XX) : 9-80 along with the relevant E.N.'s.

43. The wording "We made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign" is very significant, because it means that neither the son of Mary nor his mother was each a separate Sign, but both of them together were a Sign. This verse is a clear proof that a son was born to Mary without cohabitation with a man and that Jesus had no father. For fuller details see Āl-'Imrān (III) : 45-49, An-Nisā' (IV) : 156, 171, Maryam (XIX) : 16-35 and Al-Anbiyā' (XXI) : 91 and the relevant E.N.'s.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the case of the error in regard to Prophet Jesus and his mother was different from the error in regard to other Prophets, who were rejected because they were human beings. But the deviation in regard to Prophet Jesus and his mother was that the credulous people raised them from the low position of human beings to the high rank of Godhead. On the other hand, those, who went to the other extreme accused Mary of unchastity, although they were witnesses of the miraculous birth of Jesus and had heard him speak in the cradle.

44. Different people have mentioned different places, like Damascus, Ar-Ramlah, Jerusalem and Egypt, in regard to the plateau where Allah gave them shelter. From the Christian traditions it appears that Mary had to leave her home twice after the birth of Prophet Jesus, first in the time of Herod when she took him to Egypt and stayed there till Herod's death, and

then in the time of Arichelaus when she took him to Nazareth in Galilee. (Matthew, 2 : 13-23). Therefore it cannot be said with certainty to which of these two emigrations the Qur'ān refers here. It is, however, obvious that the place of shelter was a plateau which provided them with all the necessities of life.

45. In the preceding passage (vv. 23-50), the stories of some Prophets have been related as individuals, but in this verse all of them have been addressed together. However, it does not mean that they were present at one and the same place at the time of address. As a matter of fact, this way of address has been adopted to show that the Message of all the Messengers, who came to different countries in different ages, was the same and they all belonged to one and the same community. (v. 52). Therefore the Message to one Messenger was meant to be the Message for each one of them. In this verse, they have been addressed together as if they were present at one and the same place in order to emphasize this same aspect of the matter. But it is an irony that some stupid people of this age have concluded that this verse has been addressed to those messengers who were to come after Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). It is obvious that this interpretation cannot fit in the context in which the verse occurs.

46. "Pure things" implies that they should be wholesome and must have been earned in lawful ways. Here the instruction, "eat of pure things", is meant to refute the theory and practice of asceticism. The Qur'ān teaches the middle way between the life of asceticism and that of licence. The fact that the instruction, "eat of pure things", precedes "do righteous deeds", is meant to impress that righteous deeds are meaningless without eating lawful provisions. The Holy Prophet impressed this very thing, saying, "O people, Allah is pure and loves pure things." Then he recited this verse (51) and said, "A person makes a long pilgrimage in a dishevelled condition and prays with raised hands, 'O my Lord, O my Lord', whereas he eats unlawful food, wears unlawful clothes and has been brought up on unlawful provisions. How can such a one expect that Allah will grant his prayer?" (Related by Abū Hurairah).

47. The original Arabic word *ummat* (community) comprises those individuals who have something basic common among them. All the Messengers of Allah belonged to one and the same community because they had the same creed and the same religion and the same Message. See also Al-Baqarah (II) : 130-133 and 213, Āl-'Imrān (III) : 19-20, 33-34, 64, 79-85, An-Nisā' (IV) : 150-152, Al-A'araf (VII) : 59, 65, 73, 85, Yūsuf (XII) : 37-40, Maryam (XIX) : 49-59, and Al-Anbiyā' (XXII) : 71-93 along with the relevant E.N.'s.

48. This is not a mere statement of a fact, but it is a link of the same argument which is being put forward from the very beginning of the Sūrah. The argument is this : Islam has been the real and original religion of all the Prophets from Noah to Jesus (Allah's peace be upon them all), because all of them brought and taught the same doctrines of *Tauhid* and the Here-

after. On the contrary, all the other religions are the perversions of "the real and original religion", which has been tempered with in many ways. Therefore, those who are following the perverted religions are in the wrong and not the Holy Prophet who is inviting them to "the real and original religion".

49. There is a gap between v. 53 and v. 54, which has been left to the listener to fill, because the background of the whole discourse itself helps to fill it. Five years had passed since the Holy Prophet had been inviting his people to the original religion. He had left no stone unturned to convince them by reasoning and by historical evidence that his Message was based on the truth. His people had seen the practical results of the acceptance of his Message and had witnessed his own high character which was by itself a guarantee that he was a trustworthy man. But in spite of all this, his people were rejoicing in their erroneous beliefs which they had inherited from their forefathers. This was not all. They had become his bitter enemies and were trying to defeat him and his Message by every wicked machination.

After filling the gap, the meaning of verse 51 becomes quite clear. It does not mean that the Holy Prophet should give up his preaching and leave the disbelievers to themselves. This way of address has been employed to shake and rouse the disbelievers. This verse warns them to realize that the time was coming near when they would see for themselves that the Messenger was in the right and they were in the wrong.

50. This question has been posed as a proof of the main theme of the Sūrah. It is meant to remove their misconception of "success", "welfare" and "prosperity", which the disbelievers had formed to delude themselves. According to them, the one, who enjoyed the good things of life and wielded power and influence in the society, had attained "success". On the other hand, the one who was deprived of these things was a "failure". This misconception had involved them in another serious misunderstanding. They thought that the one who had attained "success" was in the right, and the beloved of Allah. Otherwise, how could he have attained all the "successes"? On the contrary, the one who was apparently deprived of these things was surely wrong in his creed and erroneous in his deeds, and was under the wrath of God (or gods). As this misconception is one of the greatest deviations of the materialists, the Qur'ān has stated it and refuted it in different ways at different places and made the reality plain. For instance, see Al-Baqarah (II) : 126, 212, Al-A'arāf (VII) : 32, At-Taubah (IX) : 55, 69, 85, Yūnus (X) : 17, Hūd (XI) : 3, 27-31, 38-39, Ar-Ra'd (XIII) : 26, Al-Kahf (XVIII) : 28, 32-43, 103-105, Maryam (XIX) : 77-80, Ṭā Hā (XX) : 131-132, Al-Anbiyā' (XXI) : 44 along with the relevant E.N.'s.

In order to remove the above-mentioned misconceptions one should keep in view the following :

(1) "Success" is a far higher thing than the material prosperity and the transitory success of an individual, community or nation.

(2) It is absolutely wrong to consider "prosperity" and "success" as a criterion of truth and falsehood.

(3) It should be noted well that this world is a place of test and trial and not a place of reward and retribution. It is true that even in this world, sometimes there is some punishment or reward, but it is on a very limited scale, and even in this, there is an aspect of the test. Therefore it is an utter folly to consider material "success" and "prosperity" to be a proof that the recipient is in the right and so the beloved of the Lord, and *vice versa*. Moreover, the tests and trials of individuals and communities are of many varieties and a seeker after truth must understand at the outset that the worldly "success" or "failure" of the people is not the result of ultimate reward or punishment and cannot be regarded as the criterion for the right or wrong creed, morals and actions and a sign of being the beloved of God or otherwise.

(4) One must have a firm belief that truth and righteousness will ultimately gain victory over falsehood and wickedness. As regards the criterion of truth and falsehood and right and wrong, one must judge this in the light of Revelations and teachings of the Messengers, because common sense confirms the same, and it is also supported by the general conception which mankind has always had of good and evil.

(5) As a corollary of the above, it would have become clear that according to the Qur'ân (and this is confirmed by common sense), the conception of "reward" and "punishment" should also be different from the common one. For instance, if a wicked person or community is enjoying "prosperity", it is not a reward of its evil deeds but a harder test for it, and it is not a blessing but the wrath of Allah. It means that Allah has decided to punish the "prosperous people" with a severe scourge. On the other hand, if the righteous people are suffering from hardships and afflictions, it is not a punishment from Allah but a blessing in disguise to pass them through the "fire" to remove impurity, if any, from the pure gold. If this hard trial is a blessing for the righteous people, it is a test for the wicked people to give them a severe punishment for the persecution of the former.

51. That is, they do not live a carefree life devoid of the fear of God. They live in awe of Him and are fully conscious that He oversees and watches them in all their motives and actions and they are thus deterred from thinking and doing evil.

52. "Signs" here means both Divine Revelations to the Prophets and the signs found in man's own self and in the universe around him. To believe in the verses of the Book is to affirm them, and to believe in the signs of human self and the universe is to affirm the realities which they point to.

53. Though belief in the Revelations itself engrains the doctrine of *Tauhid* in the hearts, yet the believers have been warned to guard against

shirk. This is because, in spite of believing in the Revelations, man is inclined to commit *shirk* in one form or the other, for instance, in exaggerating the teachings of the Prophets and righteous people, supplicating and serving others than Allah, etc.

54. This verse (60) may be elaborated like this : "They serve their Lord and try their best to obey Him and do righteous deeds, but all along they remain humble in their hearts and are not puffed up with the pride of their piety : nay, in spite of all their good deeds, their hearts are always filled with awe that they shall have to render an account to their Lord, and they are not sure whether they will come out successful in the judgment of their Lord or not."

A concrete interpretation of this verse is afforded by Caliph 'Umar. Although he served his Allah in a way that was exemplary, yet he was so afraid of accountability to Him that he is reported to have said before death : "I shall consider it a favour, if I am neither rewarded nor punished in the Hereafter." Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣri has expressed the same thing in a beautiful manner : "A believer obeys Allah and is yet fearful of Him, and a hypocrite disobeys Allah and is yet fearless of Him."

55. The enunciation of this fundamental proposition, in the context in which it occurs, is very meaningful. In the preceding passage (vv. 57-61), the characteristics of those people, who deserve true success, have been stated, and in this verse (62), it has been made clear that those excellent qualities can be attained by anyone who tries to achieve true success, as if to say, "The conditions We have laid down for true success are within the reach of those who strive for it, for 'We do not burden... Therefore if you, O disbelievers, desire to achieve true success, you should follow the example of the Believers from among yourselves, who have really attained it."

56. According to the Qur'ān, an elaborate "conduct book" of every individual is being maintained accurately. This records every word he utters, every deed or act he performs, even every hidden thought and intention that he cherishes in his heart and mind. See also Al-Kahf (XVIII) : 49 and E.N. 46 thereof.

57. That is, neither a person will be accused of and punished for something he had not done, nor will he be deprived of the full reward of a good act that he had done.

58. They are heedless that everything they are saying and doing, is being recorded in some "book" and that they shall have to render an account of everything.

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أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُم لَهَا غِيبُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِمْ
 بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ لَا تَجْعَلُوا الْيَوْمَ لَنَا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾
 قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَتِي تُنزلُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ آعْقَابِكُمْ تَنكِصُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ
 بِهِ سِيرًا تَهْجُرُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمْ
 الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ
 جِنَّةٌ بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كِرهُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَ لَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ
 أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَ الْأَرْضُ وَ مَنْ فِيهِنَّ بَلْ آتَيْنَهُمْ بِنُذُرِهِمْ
 فَهَمُّ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرَّاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ
 وَ خَيْرُ الرِّزْقَيْنِ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَ إِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَ إِنَّ
 الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنُكِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَ لَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَ كَشَفْنَا
 مَا بِهِمْ مِّنْ ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْبَهُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَ لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ
 فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَ مَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا
 عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَ
 الْأَبْصَارَ وَ الْآفِئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 وَ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَ يُمِيتُ وَ لَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَ
 النَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالُوا إِذَا مَا
 وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَ عِظَامًا ؕ إِنَّا لَنَبْعَثُوهُمْ ﴿٩٢﴾ لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَ آبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ
 قَبْلُ لَنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَ مَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ

الربيع

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They will continue their misdeeds till We bring punishment on the epicureans among them:⁵⁹ then they will begin to bellow.⁶⁰—Now⁶¹ stop your groanings: you will get no help from Us this Day; for when My Revelations were recited to you, you turned on your heels (hearing the voice of the Messenger).⁶² In your arrogance you paid no heed to him, ridiculed him in your meeting places⁶³ and talked nonsense about him. 64-67

Have the disbelievers never considered the Word⁶⁴? Or, has he brought something the like of which had not come to their forefathers?⁶⁵ Or, did they not know their Messenger well that they fight shy of him (as if he were a stranger)?⁶⁶ Or, are they really convinced that he is possessed (by a jinn)?⁶⁷ Nay! the real thing is that he has brought the Truth and most of them have aversion to the Truth.—And had the Truth followed their lusts, the whole system of the heavens and the earth, and of all who dwell in them, would have been disrupted.⁶⁸—Nay, We have brought them admonition for their own good, but they are turning away from it.⁶⁹ 68-71

Are you demanding some recompense from them? 72-74
Allah's recompense is best for you, for He is the best Providence.⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, you are inviting them to the Straight Path, but it suits those, who do not believe in the Hereafter, to deviate from the Straight Path.⁷¹

If We take compassion on them and relieve them of their affliction, they will persist blindly in their rebellion:⁷² for even now, when they are suffering from a torment, they have not bowed before their Lord nor humbled themselves. However, when We will smite them with a dreadful scourge, you will see that they will despair of all good and become desperate.⁷³ 75-77

It is Allah Who has endowed you with the faculties of hearing and seeing and given you hearts to think, but you do not show any gratitude.⁷⁴ It is He Who has scattered you in the earth, and before Him you shall all be mustered. It is He Who gives life and ordains death, and controls the alternation of the night and the day.⁷⁵ Can you not understand this?⁷⁶ Nay! these people say what their forefathers said before them: They say, "Shall we be raised up again, when we have turned into dust after death and become mere bones?" 78-83

We have heard many such threats and so did our forefathers before us. These are nothing but ancient tales".⁷⁷

84-85

Say to them, "Tell me, if you know, whose is the earth and all who dwell in it?" They will say, "Allah's". Ask them, "Then why do you not understand this"?.⁷⁸

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59. The epicureans will probably be punished in this worldly life because in the enjoyment of luxury and pleasure they forgot the rights of the other people and transgressed the prescribed limits.

60. *Ju'ār* is bellowing by a bull painfully. Here the word has been used tauntingly for a groaning person who does not deserve any mercy, as if to say, "Now that you are going to be punished for your misdeeds, you have started bellowing."

61. That is, they will be told this at that time.

62. That is to say, "In the worldly life you did not pay any heed to what the Messenger said ; nay, you did not even like to hear his voice."

63. The meeting places where the people of Makkah gathered together at night to hold consultations, to gossip and tell tales, etc.

64. That is, "Do they mean to imply that they reject the Message because they do not understand it? whereas the Qur'ān is not an enigma, nor is it being presented in an incomprehensible language, nor does it deal with themes and subjects which are beyond human understanding. The fact is that they understand everything it presents, but they oppose and reject it, because they have no intention to follow and believe what it presents."

65. That is, "Is the Qur'ān presenting something which they had never heard before ? No, that is not so. Allah had been sending His Messages through His Prophets, who came to Arabia and in the adjoining lands and they are well acquainted with them, especially with Prophets Abraham and Ismael, and Hūd, Şaleh and Shoaib, who are acknowledged by them as Prophets of God, and who were not idol-worshippers but enjoined the worship of One God." For further explanation, see E.N. 84 of *Al-Furqān* (XXV), E.N. 5 of *As-Sajdah* (XXXII) and E.N. 35 of *Sabā* (XXXIV).

66. That is, "Do they reject the Message because Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) who is inviting them to it, is a stranger among them? No, this is not so, for he was born and bred among them in a noble family : he bears a pure and high character : he has been truthful, upright, trustworthy, honest and morally chaste throughout his life : he is a noble and gentle person, peace-loving and just by nature, honest in word and deed, sympathetic and helpful to the weak and poor. And they themselves testified to all this before he claimed to be a Messenger of Allah. Then he has been consistently preaching the same Message from the first day of his Mission. Then whatever he has preached he has first practised it himself and demonstrated its truth : there has been no contradiction

between his word and deed : he and his followers have faithfully and honestly put into practice the Message of the Qur'ān and shown excellent results." For further details, see E.N. 21 of Al-An'ām (VI), E.N. 21 of Yūnus (X) and E.N. 105 of Banī Isrā'il (XVII).

67. That is, "Do they reject his Message because they regard Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) to be possessed by a jinn ? No, this is also not correct, because in their heart of hearts, they themselves regard him as a wise and sagacious person. It is therefore ridiculous to regard a man like him to be possessed by a jinn, for such a person cannot say wise things and do noble deeds like him. How strange that a person possessed by a jinn (or having epileptic fits according to the western orientalists) should utter and recite sublime discourses of the Qur'ān and start and guide a successful Movement which should revolutionise the way of life not only of his own people but of the whole world."

68. This brief sentence expresses a great reality which should be understood well. The foolish people in the world generally feel offended by a person who points out the Truth to them. They do not like to hear and consider the Truth because it goes against their desires and interests but the Truth remains the Truth and cannot be changed after one's personal whims and wishes. Man is subject to the eternal and un-al-terable laws operating in the universe and has therefore to adjust his thinking, desires and conduct accordingly and should try to discover the Truth and Reality through experience, reasoning and observation. Only a foolish person can stick to and regard his personal whims, wishes and prejudices to be the reality and refuse to hear and consider any argument, however rational and scientific, simply because it goes against them.

69. Here the word *zīkr* means :

(1) Mention of human nature and its demands, (2) admonition, (3) esteem, honour and fame.

In the light of these, the full meaning of the verse will be : "Your rejection of the Qur'ān is irrational, for it contains the mention of those things which develop the best in human nature : it is an admonition that will result in your own good and well-being, and it will bring esteem and honour for you in this world as well as in the Hereafter."

70. This was yet another proof of the Holy Prophet's Prophethood : he was conveying the Message without demanding any recompense for it, and he had no self-interest in it. Nay, he had staked his business, reputation, peaceful home life, relationships with the unbelieving kindred for the success of his Mission and was being ruthlessly persecuted for its sake. A selfish person could not have risked his all for the sake of only worldly motives. He would rather have exploited the racial and tribal prejudices of his people to become their ruler and leader. On the contrary, his Message not only cut at the root of those prejudices but tended to destroy the very bases which helped his tribe to wield influence and authority over the polytheists of Arabia. This is an argument which the Qur'ān has

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وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٧﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ
 مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُحْيِيهِ وَلا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾
 سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾
 مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ
 وَلَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
 فَتَعَلَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيدُنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي
 فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ إِدْفَعْ بِاللَّيْلِ
 هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ
 هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ
 الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿١٠٠﴾ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا
 كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي
 الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ
 فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا
 أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾
 أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَيْتِي تَتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا
 شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾
 قَالَ اخْسَأُوا فِيهَا وَلا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿١٠٩﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ
 رَبَّنَا إِنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَ أَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ فَاتَّخَذَتْهُمْ
 مَخْرِبًا حَتَّىٰ أَنسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ

Say to them, "To whom do the seven heavens and the Glorious Throne belong?" They will say, "To Allah".⁷⁹ Say, "Then why do you not fear Him".⁸⁰ Say to them, "Tell me, if you know, whose is the Sovereignty⁸¹ over everything? And who is that Being who gives protection while none can give protection against Him?" They will surely reply, "This power belongs to Allah." Say, "How then are you so bewitched?"⁸² The fact is that We have brought the Truth before them and un-doubtedly these people are liars.⁸³ Allah has no offspring,⁸⁴ and there is no other deity as a partner with Him. Had it been so, every deity would have become an independent ruler over its creation; moreover, in that case, they would have tried to override one another.⁸⁵ Exalted is Allah and free from the sort of things they attribute to Him. He has full knowledge of all that is open and hidden,⁸⁶ and He is far above the *shirk* these people invent.

O Muḥammad, pray, "Lord, if You inflict, during my presence among them, that punishment with which they are being threatened, then, O my Lord, do not include me among these unjust people."⁸⁷ And the fact is that We have the power to make you a witness of what they are being threatened with.

O Muḥammad, repel evil with that which is best: We are fully aware of what they utter against you. And pray, "Lord, I seek refuge in You from the promptings of the satans; more than that: I seek refuge in You, my Lord, even from their coming near me".⁸⁸

(These people will not desist from their doings,) till when death comes to any one of them, he will say, "Lord, send me back to the world⁸⁹ which I have left: I hope I will now do righteous deeds."⁹⁰—By no means!⁹¹ it is a mere saying that he is uttering:⁹² for now there is a Barrier between the dead (and the world which they have left) up to the Day⁹³ when they shall be raised up again. Then, when the Trumpet will be blown, all (worldly) relations between them shall cease to function and they will not inquire about one another.⁹⁴ Then only those whose scales will be heavy,⁹⁵ will attain success; and those, whose scales will be light, will be the people who made themselves liable to loss;⁹⁶ they shall abide in Hell for ever. The "Fire" will scorch their faces so as to expose their jaws⁹⁷—(It will be said to them,) "Are you

not the same people, who treated as lies My Revelations, when they were recited to you?" They will say, "Our Lord, our bad luck prevailed over us, and we were, indeed, erring people. Our Lord, now take us out of this place: after this, if we be guilty of such a thing, we shall indeed be wrong-doers." In answer to this, Allah will say, "Get away from here, remain herein and do not speak to Me."⁹⁸ For, you are the very same people, who made fun of some of Our servants when they prayed to Us, 'Our Lord, we have believed: so forgive us and have mercy, on us, for You are the Most Merciful of all who show mercy? So much so that in your obduracy, you even forgot My very existence, and went on scoffing at them.

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advanced again and again as a proof of the truth of the Mission of the other Prophets as well. See Al-An'ām (VI) : 90, Yūnus (X) : 72, Hūd (XI) : 29, 51, Yūsuf (XII) : 104, Yā Sīn (XXXVI) : 21 along with the relevant E. N's.

71. This was the real reason why they were deviating from the Right Path. As they did not believe in the Hereafter, they thought that no account would be taken from them of what they did in this world. Therefore it did not matter whether they followed the Truth or falsehood. Their only aim in life was to gratify the lusts of the flesh and gratify them in the best way possible.

72. The affliction alluded to in this verse was the famine which occurred in Makkah some time after the advent of Prophethood. According to Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, when the Quraish persistently refused to accept the invitation of the Holy Prophet and started putting up stiff resistance, he prayed, "O Allah, help me against them with a seven-year famine like the seven-year famine of the time of Prophet Joseph." So a severe famine started in Makkah with the result that people were obliged to eat carrion. This famine has been alluded to in a number of Makki Sūrah's. For instance see Al-An'ām (VI) : 42-44, Al-A'arāf (VII) : 94-99, Yūnus (X) : 11, 12, 21, An-Nahl (XVI) : 112-113 and Ad-Dukhān (XLIV) : 10-16 along with the relevant E.N.'s.

73. The Arabic word *mublis* is used for one whom frustration makes so desperate and obdurate that he does not hesitate to resort to any crime. The Devil has been called *Iblis* for the same reason.

74. The disbelievers have been told to consider the great blessings of eyes, ears, mind and heart and use them as human beings should, and show gratitude to the Creator by accepting His Message.

75. If one makes the right use of one's faculties and observes these things properly, one can find the Truth, for it is obvious that the great mechanism of the universe could not have come into existence by a mere

accident. There must be its Creator who need not have any associates or partners and that the universe could not have been created without a purpose as a mere sport. The very existence of a wonderful, rational, thinking and feeling creature—Man—who has been delegated with powers, is a clear proof that his life will not come to an end at death.

76. Here attention is being drawn to the proof of both *Tauhīd* and Life-after-death, and in the other phenomena cited to the refutation of both *shirk* and rejection of the Hereafter.

77. Their denial of the Life-after-death implied the denial of the powers and wisdom of Allah as well.

78-79. That is, "If you acknowledge this, why do you not then understand that none but Allah deserves to be worshipped and that when He has once created the earth and all the things in it, it is not difficult for Him to re-create them once again?"

80. That is, "Why are you not afraid of rebelling against Him and worshipping others besides Him? Why do you not dread that one day you shall have to give an account of all your deeds to the All-Powerful Sovereign of the universe?"

81. The word *malakūt* in the Text is a strong word which combines both sovereignty and ownership. The verse therefore means: "Whose is the Sovereignty and Who possesses the real ownership rights over everything?"

82. In order to understand the significance of this question, we should know that the art of magic makes a thing appear different from what it really is. Thus the question will mean: "Who has bewitched you that, in spite of knowing and acknowledging all these things, you do not understand the Reality? Who has bewitched you that even after acknowledging Allah to be the Owner and the All-Powerful Sovereign, you set up other owners and sovereigns along with Him or make them partners with Him and worship them? Who has deluded you that you should dare to be treacherous and unfaithful to Allah knowing that none can protect you against Him, and forget that you will be called to account for these things?"

In this connection, it should also be noted that this question has a subtle meaning also. The Quraish accused the Holy Prophet of practising magic and sorcery. This question turns the tables on them, as if to say, "O foolish people, the man who presents the Reality appears to you to be a sorcerer, while those leaders who say things against Reality, against common sense and against your own convictions and beliefs, do not appear to you to be sorcerers at all."

83. They are liars because they say that others besides Allah have a share in His Godhead and that there is no Life-after-death, because their first saying contradicts their own admission that Allah is the Owner and the Sovereign of the universe. Then their second assertion is based on the presumption that the All-Powerful Allah cannot re-create what He has

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الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا لَا أَتَّهُمُ إِلَّا فَأَيْزُونَهُ ۗ قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ
 سِنِينَ ۗ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسَلِ الْعَادِيْنَ ۗ قُلْ إِنْ
 لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۗ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَ
 أَنَّكُمْ لِآبِنَا لَا تَرْجَعُونَ ۗ فَتَعَلَىٰ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ
 الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا
 حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ۗ وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَ
 ارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ۗ

111-115 Today I have recompensed them for their fortitude, and they have triumphed over you.”⁹⁹ Then Allah will inquire from them, “For how many years did you live on the Earth?” They will say, “We stayed there for a day or for part of a day.¹⁰⁰ You may inquire from those who kept account.” It will be said, “Well, you know now that you stayed there for a little while only. What a pity! you did not realize it then.¹⁰¹ Did you think that We had created you without any purpose,¹⁰² and that you would never be brought back to Us?”

116-117 So Exalted is Allah,¹⁰³ the true and real Sovereign. There is no god other than He: He is the Lord of the Glorious Throne. Therefore, if some one invokes any other deity along with Allah, whereof he has no proof,¹⁰⁴ he shall have to give an account to his Lord.¹⁰⁵ Such disbelievers can never attain “success”.¹⁰⁶

118 O Muḥammad, say, “Lord, forgive and have mercy! You are the most Merciful of all, who show mercy”.¹⁰⁷

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created once. This is clearly a contradiction in terms.

84. It should be noted that this is a general refutation of the belief that Allah has a child or children, and incidentally refutes the Christian belief that Christ is the son of God. Yet even some eminent commentators confine this to the refutation of the Christian belief. Obviously, there is no reason why it was necessary to refute the Christian belief

specifically in this context, when the whole discourse has been directed towards the disbelievers of Makkah alone, who were, like the Christians, guilty of this sort of *shirk*.

85. Here the argument of *Tauhid* is based on this principle : Had there been more than one God or partners in Godhead, there would have been serious differences, conflicts and wars among the different sovereigns and rulers. See Banī Isrā'il (XVII) : 42 and E.N. 47 thereof, and Al-Anbiyā' (XXI) : 22 and E. N. 22 thereof.

86. This contains a subtle allusion to the refutation of the doctrine of "intercession". See E.N.'s 85, 86 of Ṭā Hā (XX) and E.N. 27 of Al-Anbiyā' (XXI).

87. This prayer does not mean that, God forbid, there was any real danger of the Holy Prophet's also being involved in the punishment, or that if he had not invoked this prayer, he might have been involved in it. This way of address has been adopted to warn that all people should fear Allah's punishment. They should not demand it nor persist in their wickedness, if Allah gives them respite. As a matter of fact, Allah's punishment is a thing which should be dreaded not only by the sinful people but also by the righteous people, and they should all seek His refuge from it, for when the scourge of God comes, it does not destroy only the wicked people but may also involve the righteous people in it. Therefore the right course for those, who have to live in a wicked society, is that they should always pray to Allah for His refuge, for one does not know when that scourge might come down.

88. For explanation, see E.N.'s 71, 72 of Al-An'ām (VI), E.N.'s 138, 150 to 153 of Al-A'arāf (VII), E.N. 39 of Yūnus (X), E.N. 48 of Al-Hijr (XV), E. N's 122 to 124 of An-Naḥl (XVI), E.N.'s 58 to 63 of Banī Isrā'il (XVII), and E.N.'s 35 to 41 of Ḥa Mīm Sajdah (XLI).

89. In the original Text plural number has been used for Allah, which may be for reverence, or may include the angels as well, who will be seizing the criminal soul. The entreaty would be: "O my Lord! send me back!"

90. It occurs at several places in the Qur'ān that each of the criminals, after his death till his entry into Hell, and even after that, will plead again and again : "Lord, send me back to the world : I will no more disobey Thee : I will now do righteous deeds." See Al-Anām (VI) : 27, 28, Al-A'arāf (VII) : 53, Ibrāhīm (XIV) : 44, 45, Ash-Shu'arā' (XXVI) : 102, Al-Fāṭir (XXXV) : 37, Az-Zumar (XXXIX) : 58, 59, Al-Mu'min (XL) : 10-12, and Ash-Shūrā (XLII) : 44 along with the relevant E.N.'s.

91. That is, "He will never be sent back nor given another opportunity, for in that case the test and trial for which man is sent in this world becomes meaningless." For further explanation, see Al-Baqarah (II) : 210 and E. N. 228 thereof, and E.N.'s 6, 139, 140 of Al-An'ām (VI) and E.N. 26 of Yūnus (X).

92. That is, "Now, when he has met his doom, he has nothing more to say than that he should be sent back to the world ; so let him say what he likes ; he will never be allowed to go back."

93. That is, "Now there is a 'Barrier' between them and the world, which will not allow them to go back to it. Therefore they shall remain in that state up to the Day of Resurrection."

94. It does not mean that the father will not remain "father" and the son will not remain "son", etc. It only means that they will not be able to help each other, nor shall they be able to enquire about each other as father and son, for each one will be worried and anxious about his own plight. See also Al-Ma'ārij (LXX) : 10-14, and 'Abasa (LXXX) : 34-37.

95. That is, those whose good deeds will be heavy and will out-weigh their evil deeds.

96. For the criterion of "success" and "failure" in the Hereafter, please refer to E.N.'s 1 and 50 above.

97. The word *kālīḥ* means a face whose skin has been removed so as to expose the jaws. When somebody asked Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd the meaning of *kālīḥ*, he said, "Haven't you seen the scorched head of a slaughtered animal?"

98. "... do not speak to Me" : "... do not plead your case with Me." According to some traditions, these will be their last words and they shall never be allowed to speak again, but this is contradicted by the Qur'ān itself in the succeeding verses. Therefore, it only means this that they will not be able to plead their case again.

99. This is again a reference to those who will deserve success or be doomed to failure in the Hereafter.

100. For explanation, see Ṭā Hā (XX) : 103 and E.N. 80 thereof.

101. That is, "Our Messengers warned you that the life in this world is transitory and is for test and trial, but you did not realize it then and denied that there was any life in the Hereafter and behaved in accordance with that belief."

102. The Arabic word *'abathan* in the Text also means "for the sake of sport". Then the verse will mean : "Did you think that We had created you merely for the sake of sport and there was no purpose behind your creation? Therefore you may eat, drink, be merry and enjoy yourself as you please."

103. Allah is above this that He should create you without any purpose and that you may associate partners with Him with impunity.

104. It may also be translated as : "The one who invokes any other deity along with Allah, has nothing to support him in this act."

105. That is, he cannot escape accountability.

106. Again, the reference is to those who will attain true success and to those who will be deprived of it.

107. Compare and contrast this "prayer" with verse 109. Here the Holy Prophet has been told to make the same prayer as contained in verse 109, as if to say, "You (and your followers) should supplicate Allah with the same prayer so that, if the people scoff at you, they themselves might provide a proof of a strong case against themselves."



XXIV

AN-NUR : النُّور

XXIV

AN-NŪR النُّور

INTRODUCTION

Name

This Sūrah takes its name, An-Nūr, from verse 35.

Period of Revelation

The consensus of opinion is that it was sent down after the Campaign against Banī al-Muṣṭaliq and this is confirmed by vv. 11-20 that deal with the incident of the "Slander", which occurred during that Campaign. But there is a difference of opinion as to whether this Campaign took place in 5 A.H. before the Battle of the Trench or in 6 A.H. after it. It is important to decide this issue in order to determine whether this Sūrah was sent down earlier or Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (XXXIII), which is the only other Sūrah containing the Commandments about the observance of purdah by women. Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb was admittedly sent down on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench. Now if this Battle occurred earlier, it would mean that the initial instructions in connection with the Commandments of purdah were sent down in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb and they were complemented later by the Commandments revealed in this Sūrah. On the other hand, if the Campaign against Banī al-Muṣṭaliq occurred earlier, the chronological order of the Commandments would be reversed, and it would become difficult to understand the legal wisdom and implications of the Commandments of purdah.

According to Ibn Sa'd, the Campaign against Banī al-Muṣṭaliq took place in Sha'bān 5 A.H. and the Battle of the Trench in Zil-Qa'dah the same year. This opinion is based on some traditions from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah about the events connected with the "Slander" in which she refers to a dispute between Ḥadrat Sa'd bin 'Ubādah and Sa'd bin

Mu'āz. Ḥadrat Sa'd bin Mu'āz, according to authentic traditions, died during the Campaign against Banī Quraizah, which took place immediately after the Battle of the Trench. It is, therefore, evident that he could not be present in 6 A.H. to take part in a dispute about the "Slander".

On the other hand, Muḥammad bin Ishāq says that the Battle of the Trench took place in Shawwāl 5 A.H. and the Campaign against Banī al-Muṣṭaliq in Sha'bān 6 A.H. This opinion is supported by many authentic traditions from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah and others. According to these traditions, (1) the Commandments about purdah had been sent down in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb before the incident of the "Slander", (2) the Holy Prophet had married Ḥadrat Zainab in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A.H. after the Battle of the Trench, (3) Ḥamnah, sister of Ḥadrat Zainab, had taken a leading part in spreading the "Slander", just because Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah was a rival of her sister. All this evidence supports the view of Muḥammad bin Ishāq.

Now let us consider the two opinions a little more closely. The only argument in favour of the first opinion is the mention of the presence of Ḥadrat Sa'd bin Mu'āz in a dispute connected with the incident of the "Slander". But this argument is weakened by some other traditions from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, in which she mentions Ḥadrat Usaid bin Ḥudair instead of Ḥadrat Sa'd bin Mu'āz in this dispute. It may, therefore, be assumed that there has been some confusion regarding the two names in reporting the traditions. Moreover, if we accept the first opinion, just because of the mention of the name of Ḥadrat Sa'd bin Mu'āz in some traditions, we encounter other difficulties that cannot be resolved in any way. For, in that case, we shall have to admit that the revelation of the Commandments of purdah and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Ḥadrat Zainab had taken place even earlier than the Battle of the Trench. But we learn from the Qur'ān and many authentic traditions that both these events happened after that Battle and the Campaign against Banī Quraizah. That is why Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Qayyim and some other eminent scholars have held the opinion of Muḥammad bin Ishāq as correct, and we also

hold it to be so. Thus, we conclude that Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb was sent down earlier than Sūrah An-Nūr, which was revealed in the latter half of 6 A.H. several months after Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb.

Historical Background

Now let us review the circumstances existing at the time of the revelation of this Sūrah. It should be kept in mind that the incident of the "Slander", which was the occasion of its revelation, was closely connected with the conflict between Islam and the disbelievers.

After the victory at Badr, the Islamic movement began to gain strength day by day; so much so that by the time of the Battle of the Trench, it had become so strong that the united forces of the enemy numbering about ten thousand failed to crush it and had to raise the siege of Al-Madīnah after one month. It meant this, and both the parties understood it well, that the war of aggression which the disbelievers had been waging for several years, had come to an end. The Holy Prophet himself declared: "After this year, the Quraish will not be able to attack you; now you will take the offensive."

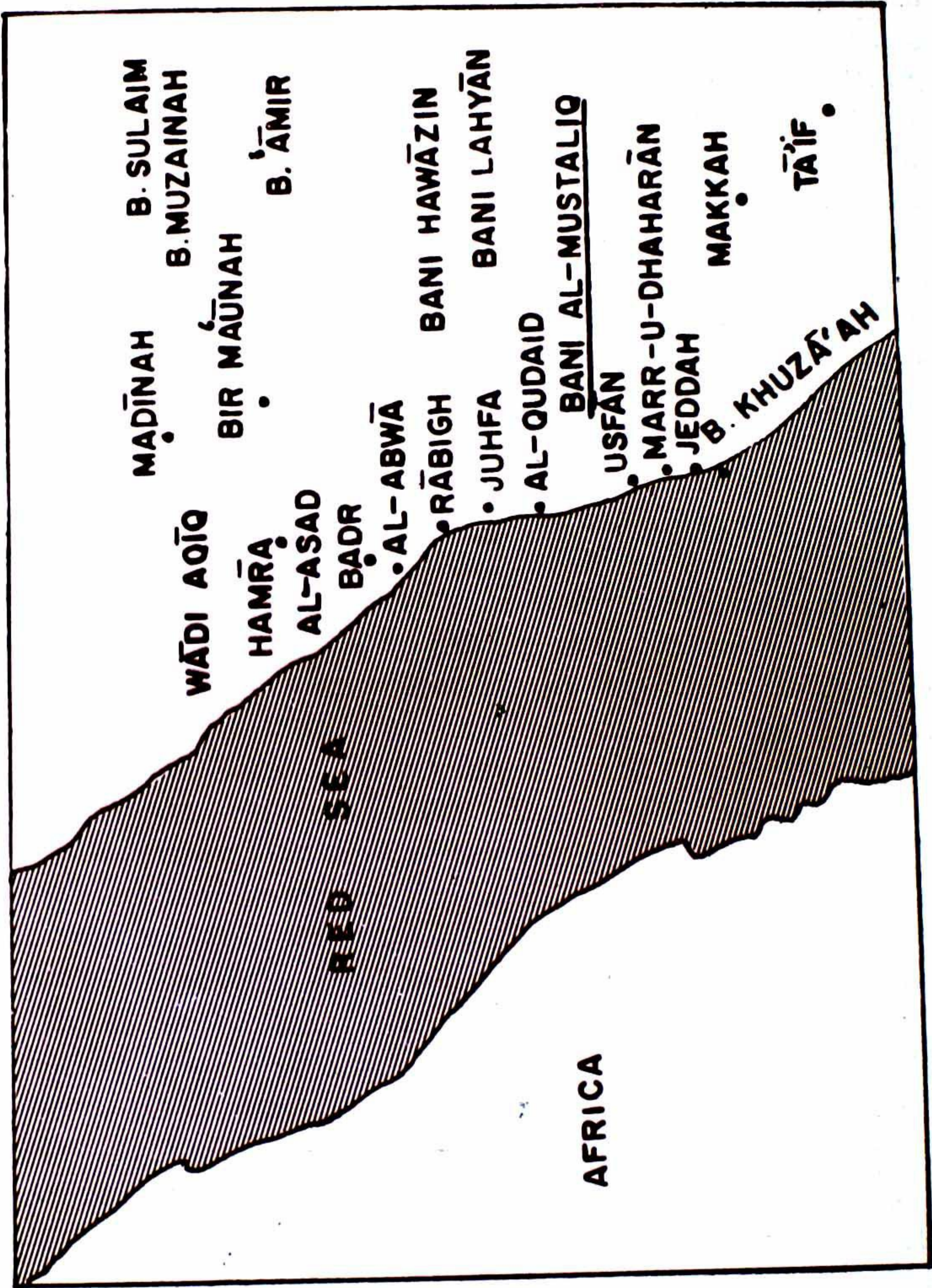
When the disbelievers realized that they could not defeat Islam on the battlefield, they chose the moral front to carry on the conflict. It cannot be said with certainty whether this change of tactics was the outcome of deliberate consultations, or it was the inevitable result of the humiliating retreat in the Battle of the Trench, for which all the available forces of the enemy had been concentrated. They knew it well that the rise of Islam was not due to the numerical strength of the Muslims nor to their superior arms and ammunition nor to their greater material resources; nay, the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds on all these fronts. They owed their success to their moral superiority. Their enemies realized that the pure and noble qualities of the Holy Prophet and his followers were capturing the hearts of the people, and were also binding them together into a highly disciplined community. As a result of this, they were defeating the *mushriks* and the Jews both on the peace and on

the war fronts, because the latter lacked discipline and character.

Under the above-mentioned circumstances, the wicked designs of the disbelievers led them to start a campaign of vilification against the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in order to destroy the bulwark of morale that was helping them to defeat their enemies. Therefore the strategy was to attain the assistance of the hypocrites to spread slanders against the Holy Prophet and his followers so that the *mushriks* and the Jews could exploit these to sow the seeds of discord among the Muslims and undermine their discipline.

The first opportunity for the use of the new strategy was afforded in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A.H. when the Holy Prophet married Hadrat Zainab (daughter of Jahsh), who was the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Hārithah. The Holy Prophet had arranged this marriage in order to put an end to the custom of ignorance, which gave the same status to the adopted son that was the right only of the son from one's own loins. The hypocrites, however, considered it a golden opportunity to vilify the Holy Prophet from inside the community, and the Jews and the *mushriks* exploited it from outside to ruin his high reputation by this malicious slander. For this purpose fantastic stories were concocted and spread to this effect: "One day Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) happened to see the wife of his adopted son and fell in love with her; he manoeuvred her divorce and married her." Though this was an absurd fiction it was spread with such skill, cunning and artfulness that it succeeded in its purpose; so much so that some Muslim traditionists and commentators also have cited some parts of it in their writings, and the orientalisists have exploited these fully to vilify the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, Hadrat Zainab was never a stranger to the Holy Prophet that he should see her by chance and fall in love with her at first sight. For she was his first cousin, being the daughter of his real paternal aunt, Umaimah, daughter of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib. He had known her from her childhood to her youth. A year before this incident, he himself had persuaded her against her will to marry Hadrat Zaid in order to demonstrate practically that the

CAMPAIGN AGAINST BANI AL-MUSTALIQ



Quraish and the liberated slaves were equal as human beings. As she never reconciled herself to her marriage with a liberated slave, they could not pull on together for long, which inevitably led to her divorce. The above-mentioned facts were well known to all, yet the slanderers succeeded in their false propaganda with the result that even today there are people who exploit these things to defame Islam.

The second slander was made on the honour of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, a wife of the Holy Prophet, in connection with an incident which occurred while he was returning from the Campaign against Banī al-Muṣṭaliq. As this attack was even severer than the first one and was the main background of this Sūrah, we shall deal with it in greater detail.

Let us say a few words about 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, who played the part of a villain in this attack. He belonged to the clan of Khazraj and was one of the most important chiefs of Al-Madīnah. The people had even intended to make him their king a little before the Holy Prophet's migration there, but the scheme had to be dropped because of the changed circumstances. Though he had embraced Islam, he remained at heart a hypocrite and his hypocrisy was so manifest that he was called the "Chief of the Hypocrites". He never lost any opportunity to slander Islam in order to take his revenge.

Now the main theme. When in Sha'bān 6 A.H. the Holy Prophet learnt that the people of Banī al-Muṣṭaliq were making preparations for a war against the Muslims and were trying to muster other clans also for this purpose, he forestalled and took the enemy by surprise. After capturing the people of the clan and their belongings, the Holy Prophet made a halt near Muraisī', a spring in their territory. One day a dispute concerning taking water from the spring started between a servant of Ḥadrat 'Umar and an ally of the clan of Khazraj, and developed into a quarrel between the Muhājirs (immigrants) and the Anṣār (Muslims of Madīnah), but was soon settled. This, however, did not suit the strategy of 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, who also had joined the expedition with a large number of hypocrites. So he began to incite the Anṣār, saying, "You yourselves brought these people of the

Quraish from Makkah and made them partners in your wealth and property. And now they have become your rivals and want domination over you. If even now you withdraw your support from them, they shall be forced to leave your city." Then he swore and declared, "As soon as we reach back Al-Madīnah, the respectable people will turn out the degraded people from the city."¹

When the Holy Prophet came to know of this, he ordered the people to set off immediately and march back to Al-Madīnah. The forced march continued up to noon the next day without a halt on the way so that the people became exhausted and had no time for idle talk.

Though this wise judgment and quick action by the Holy Prophet averted the undesirable consequences of the mischief, 'Abdullah bin Ubayy got another opportunity for doing a far more serious and greater mischief, i.e. by engineering a "Slander" against Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, for that was a mischief which might well have involved the young Muslim Community in a civil war, if the Holy Prophet and his sincere and devoted followers had not shown wisdom, forbearance and marvellous discipline in dealing with it. In order to understand the events that led to the incident of the "Slander", we cite the story in Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah's own words. She says :

"Whenever the Holy Prophet went out on a journey, he decided by lots² as to which of his wives should accompany him. Accordingly, it was decided that I should accompany him during the expedition to Banī al-Muṣṭaliq. On the return journey, the Holy Prophet halted for the night at a place which was the last stage on the way back to Al-Madīnah. It was still night, when they began to make preparations for the march. So I went outside the camp to ease myself. When I returned and came near my halting place, I noticed that my necklace had fallen down somewhere.

1. These words of his have been cited in the Qur'ān : LXIII : 8.

2. The *Shari'ah* has allowed to decide a matter by drawing lots when the lawful rights of several persons are equal and there is no reason to prefer one to the other but the right can be given to only one of them. Obviously this is not so in a lottery.

I went back in search of it but in the meantime the caravan moved off and I was left behind all alone. The four carriers of the litter had placed it on my camel without noticing that it was empty. This happened because of my light weight due to lack of food in those days. I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down in the hope that when it would be found that I had been left behind, a search party would come back to pick me up. In the meantime I fell asleep. In the morning, when Şafwān bin Mu'aṭṭal Sulamī¹ passed that way, he saw me and recognised me for he had seen me several times before the Commandment about purdah had been sent down. No sooner did he see me than he stopped his camel and cried out spontaneously : "How sad ! the wife of the Holy Prophet has been left here!" At this I woke up all of a sudden and covered my face with my sheet. Without uttering another word, he made his camel kneel by me and stood aside, while I climbed on to the camel back. He led the camel by the nose-string and we overtook the caravan at about noon, when it had just halted and nobody had yet noticed that I had been left behind. I learnt afterwards that this incident had been used to slander me and 'Abdullah bin Ubayy was foremost among the slanderers. (According to other traditions, when Hadrat 'Ā'ishah reached the camp on the camel, led by Şafwān, and it was known that she had been left behind, 'Abdullah bin Ubayy cried out, 'By God, she could not have remained chaste. Look, there comes the wife of your Prophet openly on the camel led by the person with whom she passed the night.')

"When I reached Al-Madīnah, I fell ill and stayed in bed for more than a month. Though I was quite unaware of it, the news of the "Slander" was spreading like a scandal in the city, and had also reached the Holy Prophet. Anyhow, I noticed that he did not seem as concerned about my illness

1. Şafwān was one of those Companions, who had taken part in the Battle of Badr. He might have remained behind because : (1) He was in the habit of over-sleeping even after sunrise according to some traditions, or (2) which is more likely, he had been instructed by the Holy Prophet to remain behind to make a search for anything that might have been left in the camping ground because of darkness.

as he used to be. He would come but without addressing me directly, would inquire from others how I was and leave the house. Therefore it troubled my mind that something had gone wrong somewhere. So I took leave of him and went to my mother's house for better nursing.

“While I was there, one night I went out of the city to ease myself in the company of Msiṭah's mother, who was a first cousin of my father. As she was walking along she stumbled over something and cried out spontaneously, ‘May Miṣṭah perish!’ To this I retorted, ‘What a good mother you are that you curse your own son—the son who took part in the Battle of Badr.’ She replied, ‘My dear daughter, are you not aware of his scandal-mongering?’ Then she told me everything about the campaign of the “Slander”. (Besides the hypocrites, some true Muslims also had been involved in this campaign, and among them who took leading part in it, were Miṣṭah, Ḥassān bin Thābit, the famous poet of Islam, and Ḥamnah, daughter of Jaḥsh and sister of Ḥadrat Zainab). Hearing this horrible story, my blood curdled, and I immediately returned home, and passed the rest of the night in crying over it.

“During my absence the Holy Prophet took counsel with ‘Alī and Usāmah bin Zaid about this matter. Usāmah said good words about me to this effect: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we have found nothing but good in your wife. All that is being spread about her is a lie and calumny.’ As regards ‘Alī, he said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, there is no dearth of women; you may, if you like, marry another wife. If, however, you would like to investigate into the matter, you may send for her maid-servant and enquire into it through her.’ Accordingly, the maid-servant was sent for and questioned. She replied, ‘I declare on an oath by Allah, Who has sent you with the Truth, that I have never seen any evil thing in her, except that she falls asleep when I tell her to look after the kneaded dough in my absence and a goat comes and eats it.’

“On that same day the Holy Prophet addressed the people from the pulpit, saying: ‘O Muslims, who from among you will defend my honour against the attacks of the person who has transgressed all bounds in doing harm to me by slander-

ing my wife. By God, I have made a thorough enquiry and found nothing wrong with her nor with the man, whose name has been linked with the "Slander". At this Usaid bin Hudair (or Sa'd bin Mu'āz¹ according to other traditions) stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if that person belongs to our clan, we will kill him by ourselves, but if he belongs to the Khazraj clan, we will kill him if you order us to do so.' Hearing this Sa'd bin 'Ubādah,² chief of the Khazraj clan, stood up and said, 'You lie! you can never kill him. You are saying this just because the person belongs to our clan of Khazraj. Had he belonged to your clan, you would never have said so.' Hadrat Usaid retorted, 'You are a hypocrite: that is why you are defending a hypocrite.' At this, there was a general turmoil in the mosque, which would have developed into a riot, even though the Holy Prophet was present there the whole time. But he cooled down their anger and came down from the pulpit."

The remaining details of the incident will be cited along with our commentary on the Text, which honourably absolved Hadrat 'Ā'ishah from the blame. But here we would only want to point out the enormity of the mischief that was engineered by 'Abdullah bin Ubayy: (1) It implied an attack on the honour of the Holy Prophet and Hadrat Abū

1. Most probably the reason why some traditionists have named Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'āz in this connection is that Hadrat 'Ā'ishah might have simply mentioned the person as the "chief of the Aus clan" and they thought it was Sa'd bin Mu'āz, though he had died before this incident and had been succeeded by Hadrat Usaid bin Hudair as the chief of Aus.

2. Hadrat Sa'd bin 'Ubādah was a righteous and sincere Muslim and a devoted follower of the Holy Prophet and was one of those prominent persons, who helped spread Islam in Al-Madīnah. But in spite of all his virtues, he was strongly prejudiced in his attachment to his own clan. That is why he defended 'Abdullah bin Ubayy only because he belonged to his clan. This prejudice clung to him till his death. On the day of the conquest of Makkah, he said, "This is the day of killing in this inviolable place." At this the Holy Prophet was much annoyed and took the banner back from him. The same was the reason why he alone did not acknowledge Hadrat Abū Bakr, a Quraish, as Caliph after the death of the Holy Prophet although everybody else from among the Muhājirs and Anṣār took the oath of allegiance to him.

Bakr Siddiq. (2) He meant to undermine the high moral superiority which was the greatest asset of the Islamic Movement. (3) He intended to ignite civil war between the Muhājirs and the Anṣār, and between Aus and Khazraj, the two clans of the Anṣār.

Theme and Topics

This Sūrah and vv. 28-73 of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (of which this is the sequel) were sent down to strengthen the moral front, which at that time was the main target of the attack, vv. 28-73 of Al-Aḥzāb were sent down concerning the Holy Prophet's marriage with Ḥadrat Zainab, and on the occasion of the second attack (the "Slander" about Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah), Sūrah An-Nūr was sent down to repair the cracks that had appeared in the unity of the Muslim Community. If we keep this in view during the study of the two Sūrahs, we shall understand the wisdom that underlies the Commandments about purdah. Allah sent the following instructions to strengthen and safeguard the moral front, and to counteract the storm of propaganda that was raised on the occasion of the marriage of Ḥazrat Zainab:

(1) The wives of the Holy Prophet were enjoined to remain within their private quarters, to avoid display of adornments and to be cautious in their talk with other persons (vv. 32, 33).

(2) The other Muslims were forbidden to enter the private rooms of the Holy Prophet and instructed to ask whatever they wanted from behind the curtain. (v. 53).

(3) A line of demarcation was drawn between the *maḥram* and the non-*maḥram* relatives. Only the former were allowed to enter the private rooms of those wives of the Holy Prophet with whom they were so closely related as to prohibit marriage with them. (v. 55).

(4) The Muslims were told that the wives of the Prophet were prohibited for them just like their own real mothers; therefore every Muslim should regard them with the purest of intentions. (vv. 53, 54).

(5) The Muslims were warned that they would invite the curse and scourge of Allah if they offended the Holy

Prophet. Likewise it was a heinous sin to attack the honour of or slander any Muslim man or woman. (vv. 57, 58).

(6) All the Muslim women were enjoined to cover their faces with their sheets if and when they had to go out of their houses. (v. 59).

On the occasion of the second attack, this Sūrah was sent down to keep pure and strengthen the moral fibre of the Muslim society, which had been shaken by the enormity of the slander. We give below a summary of the Commandments and instructions in their chronological order so that one may understand how the Qur'ān makes use of the psychological occasion to reform the Community by the adoption of legal, moral and social measures.

(1) Fornication which had already been declared to be a social crime (IV: 15, 16) was now made a criminal offence and was to be punished with a hundred lashes.

(2) It was enjoined to boycott the adulterous men and women and the Muslims were forbidden to have any marriage relations with them.

(3) The one, who accused the other of adultery but failed to produce four witnesses, was to be punished with eighty lashes.

(4) The Law of *Li'ān* was prescribed to decide the charge of adultery against his own wife by a husband.

(5) The Muslims were enjoined to learn a lesson from the incident of the "Slander" about Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, as if to say, "You should be very cautious in regard to charges of adultery against the people of good reputation, and should not spread these; nay, you should refute and suppress them immediately." In this connection, a general principle was enunciated that the proper spouse for a pure man is a pure woman, for he cannot pull on with a wicked woman for long, and the same is the case with a pure woman, as if to say, "When you knew that the Holy Prophet was a pure man, nay, the purest of all human beings, how could you believe that he had experienced happiness with a wicked woman and exalted her as the most beloved of his wives? For it was obvious that an adulterous woman could not have been able to deceive, with her affected behaviour, a pure man like the

Holy Prophet. You ought also to have considered the fact that the accuser was a mean person while the accused was a pure woman. This should have been enough to convince you that the accusation was not worth your consideration; nay, it was not even conceivable.

(6) Those who spread news and evil rumours and propagate wickedness in the Muslim Community, deserve punishment and not encouragement.

(7) A general principle was laid down that relations in the Muslim Community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion: everyone should be treated as innocent unless he is proved to be guilty and *vice versa*.

(8) The people were forbidden to enter the houses of others unceremoniously and were instructed to take permission for this.

(9) Both men and women were instructed to lower their gaze and forbidden to cast glances or make eyes at each other.

(10) Women were enjoined to cover their heads and breasts even inside their houses.

(11) Women were forbidden to appear with make-up before other men except their servants or such relatives with whom their marriage is prohibited.

(12) They were enjoined to hide their make-ups when they went out of their houses, and even forbidden to put on jingling ornaments, while they moved out of their houses.

(13) Marriage was encouraged and enjoined even for slaves and slave-girls, for unmarried people help spread indecency.

(14) The institution of slavery was discouraged and the owners and other people were enjoined to give financial help to the slaves to earn their freedom under the law of *Mukātabat*.

(15) Prostitution by slave-girls was forbidden in the first instance, for prostitution in Arabia was confined to this class alone. This in fact implied the legal prohibition of prostitution.

(16) Sanctity of privacy in home life was enjoined even for servants and under-age children including one's own. They were enjoined not to enter the private rooms of any man or woman without permission, especially in the morning, at noon and at night.

(17) Old women were given the concession that they could set aside their head-covers within their houses but should refrain from display of adornments. Even they were told that it was better for them to keep themselves covered with head-wrappers.

(18) The blind, lame, crippled and sick persons were allowed to take any article of food from the houses of other people without permission, for it was not to be treated like theft and cheating, which are cognizable offences.

(19) On the other hand, the Muslims were encouraged to develop mutual relationships by taking their meals together, and the nearest relatives and intimate friends were allowed to take their meals in each other's house without any formal invitation. This was to produce mutual affection and sincere relationships between them to counteract any future mischief. Side by side with these instructions, clear signs of the Believers and the hypocrites were stated to enable every Muslim to discriminate between the two. At the same time the Community was bound together by adopting disciplinary measures in order to make it stronger and firmer than it was at the time so as to discourage the enemies from creating mischief in it.

Above all, the most conspicuous thing about this discourse is that it is free from the bitterness which inevitably follows such shameful and absurd attacks. Instead of showing any wrath at this provocation, the discourse prescribes some laws and regulations and enjoins reformative commandments and issues wise instructions that were required at the time for the education and training of the Community. Incidentally, this teaches us how to deal with such provocative mischiefs coolly, wisely and generously. At the same time, it is a clear proof that this is not the word of Prophet Muḥammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) but of a Being Who is observing all human conditions and affairs from the highest level, and guiding mankind without any personal prejudices, feelings and leanings. Had this been the word of the Holy Prophet, there would have been at least some tinge of natural bitterness in spite of his great generosity and forbearance, for it is but human that a noble man naturally becomes enraged when his own honour is attacked in this mean manner.



سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١﴾
الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ
بِهَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَيَشْهَدُ
عَذَابُهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً
وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكَةٌ وَحُرْمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾
الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ
جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ
أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعُ
شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ

XXIV

AN-NŪR النُّور

Verses : 64

Revealed at Al-Madīnah

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

This is a Sūrah which We have sent down and We have made it mandatory, and We have sent down clear Commandments in it¹ so that you may learn lessons. 1

The woman and the man guilty of fornication, flog each one of them with a hundred stripes,² and let not any pity for them restrain you in regard to a matter prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day,³ and let some of the believers witness the punishment inflicted on them.⁴ 2

A man guilty of adultery (or fornication) shall not marry any but the woman guilty of the same or a *mushrik* woman, and none shall marry a woman guilty of adultery (or fornication) but the man guilty of the same or a *mushrik* man: such marriages are forbidden to true believers.⁵ 3

As for those persons who charge chaste women with false accusations but do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and never accept their evidence afterwards, for they themselves are transgressors, except those who repent and reform themselves ; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.⁶ 4-5

As for those who accuse their own wives but have no witness except themselves, the evidence of one of them is that he shall swear four times by Allah and declare that he is true (in his charge). Then the fifth time he shall declare that Allah's curse be upon him if he be false (in his charge). 6-7

1. In all these sentences the emphasis is on "We", which implies that it is Allah Who has revealed this and none else; therefore, "You should not treat these instructions lightly like the word of an ordinary preacher. You should note it well that these have been sent down by One Who controls your lives and destinies and from Whom you can never escape even after your death."

The second sentence emphasizes that the instructions sent down in this Sūrah are not of the nature of advice which you may accept or reject at will. These are mandatory Commandments which must be obeyed. If you are a Believer and a true Muslim you are obliged to act upon them.

The third sentence states that the instructions given in this Sūrah are free from any ambiguity and are couched in clear and plain words. Therefore, you cannot put up the excuse that you could not act upon them as you did not understand them.

This is the 'Preamble' of this blessed Message after which the specific Commandments follow. The tone of the preamble itself indicates the great importance which Allah has attached to the Commandments contained in Sūrah An-Nūr. The preamble of no other Sūrah containing Commandments is so forceful as this.

2. There are various legal, moral and historical aspects of this problem which need explanation, for if these are not clarified in detail, the modern man will find it difficult to understand the Divine Law concerning it. Accordingly, we shall discuss the various aspects of the problem below :

(1) The common meaning of *zinā* which everyone knows is : "Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without the legal relationship of husband and wife existing between them." There has been complete unanimity of view among all the social systems from the earliest times to this day that this act is morally wicked, religiously sinful and socially evil and objectionable, and there has been no dissenting voice except from those stray individuals who have subordinated their moral sense to their lust, or who in their misguided notions try to be "original" and "philosophical" in their approach. The universal unanimity of view in this respect is due to the fact that man by nature abhors *zinā*. In fact, the future of human race and civilization depends on this that the relationship between the husband and wife should be built upon the basis of an enduring and everlasting bond of fidelity, which should not only be fully recognised in the social life but should also be guaranteed by the existing social structure. Without this the human race cannot survive. This is because the human child requires years of tender care and training for its survival and development and a woman alone cannot bear the burden without the cooperation of the man who became the cause of the birth of the child. Similarly human civilization itself is the product of the corporate life of a man and a woman, their setting up a home, bringing up a family, and establishing mutual relationships and inter-connections between families. If men and women were to lose sight of this essential fact, that is, the establishment of a home and raising a family, and were to meet freely just for pleasure and lust, the entire structure of human society would crumble. In fact, the very foundations on which the structure of human civilization

and culture has been built will topple down and the whole basis of the concept of a social life will disappear. It is for these reasons that free mixing of men and women, without any recognised and stable bonds of fidelity, is abhorrent to human nature, and it is for this reason that in every age *zinā* has been considered as a moral evil and, in religious terminology, a grave sin. Accordingly, the social systems in every age recognised and adopted the institution of marriage and also adopted preventive measures against adultery or fornication. The forms of the measures adopted in this direction have, however, differed under different social, cultural and religious systems. This difference has been the result of the realization of the disastrous effects of adultery (or fornication) in varying degrees : some societies have considered it to be more heinous than others, and some have conceived it clearly and some others not so clearly and confused it with other problems.

(2) Though adultery (or fornication) has always been accepted as an evil, opinion has differed as to whether it is legally a punishable offence or not, and this is where Islam differs from other religions and systems of law. Social systems which have been akin to human nature have always considered illicit intercourse between man and woman a serious crime and prescribed severe punishments for it. But with the deterioration in moral standards, this morality grew weaker and weaker and the attitude towards this crime became more and more tolerant.

The first common lapse in this connection was caused by the invidious distinction between fornication and adultery. The former as such was taken as an ordinary offence while the latter only was held as a punishable crime.

Zinā, as defined under various laws, means "sexual intercourse between a man (whether married or bachelor) and a woman, who is not the wife of anybody." This definition takes into account the position of the woman rather than of the man. If a woman is without a husband, the illicit intercourse with her amounts to fornication irrespective of the fact whether the man is married or not. The ancient laws of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and India provided very light punishments for it, and the same were adopted by the Greeks and the Romans, which finally influenced the Jewish attitude. According to the Bible, only monetary compensation is payable for such an offence. The Commandment on the subject is as follows :

"And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." (Exod. 22 : 16, 17)

The same Commandment is repeated in different words in Deuteronomy, which is as below :

"If a man finds a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with, and they be found; Then the man

that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver (about fifty-five rupees), and she shall be his wife ; because he hath humbled her." (Deut. 22 : 28, 29).

Under the Jewish law, if a priest's daughter acts immorally, she is to be sentenced to burning and the man with whom she was alleged to have acted immorally was to suffer strangulation. (Everyman's Talmud, pp. 319, 320).

To judge the extent to which this conception resembles that of the Hindus, it will be worthwhile to compare it with the laws of Manu. According to him, "Anybody who commits illicit intercourse with an unmarried girl of his own caste with her consent does not deserve any punishment. If the father of the girl is willing, the man should compensate him and marry the girl. But if the girl happens to belong to a higher caste and the man belongs to a lower caste, the girl should be turned out from her parents' house and the limbs of the man should be cut off." (Adhiai 8. Ashlok 365, 366). This punishment may be changed into burning him alive, if the girl happens to be a Brahman. (Ashlok 377).

Under all these laws, illicit intercourse with a married woman only was the real and major crime. The deciding factor for treating it as a crime was not the illicit relationship between the man and the woman but the likelihood of an awkward situation under which a child might have to be reared up by a man (the real husband of the woman), who was not its father. It was therefore not the act of *zinā* itself but the danger of the mixing up of progenies and the problem of rearing up somebody else's child at the expense of another and a possibility of its inheriting his property, that was the real basis of treating it as a crime and holding both the man and the woman as criminals. Under the Egyptian law, the man was to receive a severe beating with sticks and the nose of the woman was to be cut off. Similar punishments existed in Babylon, Assyria and Iran. According to the Hindus, the woman was to be thrown to the dogs to be torn apart and the man was to be put on a hot iron bed with fire all around him to burn him alive. At first the Greek and the Roman laws gave a man the right to kill his wife if he found her involved in adultery. He had also the option to demand monetary compensation. In the first century B.C. Augustus Caesar enacted that half the property of the man should be confiscated and he should be exiled. In case of the woman, half her dowry should be written off and one-third of her assets confiscated, and she should also be sent out to a distant part of the country. Constantine changed this law and imposed death penalty both for the man and for the woman. In the times of Leo and Marcian, this punishment was changed to imprisonment for life. Justinian further reduced the punishment and ordered that the woman should be flogged with stripes and sent to a monastery and the husband should be given the right to take her out within two years if he liked, otherwise she was to remain there for ever.

Under the Jewish law, the orders for illicit intercourse with a married woman are as under :

“And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her, she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.” (Leviticus 19 : 20).

“And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man’s wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20 : 10).

“If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman : so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.” (Deuteronomy 22 : 22).

“If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto an husband and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die ; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city, and the man, because he had humbled his neighbour’s wife : so thou shalt put away evil from among you. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her : then the man only that lay with her shall die : But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing ; *there is* in the damsel no sin worthy of death : for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so *is* this matter.” (Deuteronomy 22 : 23-26).

However, long before the advent of Christ, the Jewish jurists and scholars, the rich and the poor, had practically ceased to observe these laws. Though it was written in the Old Testament, and it was considered as a Divine Commandment, nobody was inclined to apply it practically; in the entire Jewish history, there is not a single instance where this commandment was ever enforced. When Jesus Christ embarked upon his prophetic mission, and invited the people to the eternal truth, the learned Jews, seeing that there was no way to stop the tide, brought a woman guilty of adultery before him and asked him to decide her case. (John 8 : 1-11). Their object was to create a dilemma for Christ and to tempt and embarrass him. If he decided in favour of any punishment other than stoning, they would vilify him saying, “Here comes a strange Prophet who has changed the Divine Law for the sake of worldly considerations.” And if he were to give the verdict of stoning, this would, on the one hand, bring him in direct clash with the Roman law, and on the other, give them the opportunity to tell the people, “Look! Will you believe in a Prophet who will expose you to all the severities of the Torah?” But Jesus turned the tables on them with one sentence, saying : “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” This put the jurists to shame and they departed one by one in humiliation,

and the moral degeneration of the learned in law was totally exposed. When the woman was left alone, Jesus admonished her and after her repentance let her go. Jesus did this because he was neither a judge of any court competent to decide the case, nor any evidence had been produced against her, nor was there any government to enforce the Divine Law.

On the basis of this incident and some miscellaneous sayings of Jesus on different occasions, the Christians formed an utterly erroneous conception about the crime of *zinā*. According to them, illicit intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman is a sin but not a punishable offence. But if either of them (or both) is married, adultery is treated as a crime. It is so not because of the illicit intercourse as such but because of the vow of fidelity taken by each of them before the priest at the altar. Nevertheless, there is no punishment even for this, except that the wife has the right to sue her adulterous husband and claim separation for having violated the vow of fidelity. On the other side, the husband of the adulterous woman can also sue his wife for separation and can also claim compensation from the man who had illicit intercourse with his wife. This is the punishment in the Christian law for adultery. The irony is that even this punishment is a double-edged sword, because a woman, though entitled to separation from her husband by proving his infidelity and getting rid of him, cannot remarry under the Christian law. Similarly the husband who sues his wife for infidelity can obtain judicial separation, but cannot remarry. Both the man and the woman who accuse each other of infidelity in a Christian court, will be deprived of the right of remarriage for the rest of their lives.

The Western laws of the modern times, which have also been adopted by the Muslims in various countries, are based on such conceptions. According to them, *zinā* may be an evil, and an immoral and sinful thing, but it is not a crime. It becomes a crime only when illicit intercourse is committed without the consent of the other party. As for adultery by a married man, this only provides a cause for complaint to his wife who may, if she likes, prove it and get a divorce. Similarly in the case of an adulteress, her husband can lodge a complaint against her and also against the man with whom adultery was committed and can sue both of them to claim divorce from the woman and monetary compensation from the man.

(3) The Islamic Law, in contrast to all these conceptions, holds *zinā* as a punishable crime and its committal by the married person enhances the guilt all the more. This is not so because of the violation of the oath of fidelity taken by the man or the woman nor because of the encroachment on the conjugal rights of the other, but because the criminal resorted to an unlawful method when there existed a lawful method for satisfying his sex desires. The Islamic Law views *zinā* as an act which, if allowed to be indulged in freely, will strike at the very roots of both

human race and human civilization. In the interest of the preservation of the human race and the stability of human civilization, it is imperative that relationship between man and woman should be regulated only through lawful and reliable means. And it is not possible to restrain this relationship if opportunities for free mixing of the sexes are allowed to exist, for it cannot be expected from a man or a woman to be prepared to bear the onerous responsibilities of the family life if he or she has the opportunities for the gratification of the sex desires without this. For in that case it will be as meaningless as buying a ticket for a railway journey when people can travel without a ticket as well. A ticket is essential only when travelling without a ticket is declared to be an offence. If somebody is found travelling without a ticket because he cannot afford to buy it, he is a criminal though in a lesser degree. But if a rich man resorts to this, his guilt becomes all the more serious.

(4) Islam does not rely on punitive law alone for saving humanity from the menace of *zinā*. It employs both reformatory and prohibitory measures on a large scale. It has provided legal punishment only as a last resort. Islam does not want that the people should go on committing this crime and getting flogged with stripes day and night. Its real aim is that the people should not commit this crime at all and there should be no occasion to resort to the extreme punishment. For this purpose Islam first of all purifies man: it imbues him with the fear of All-Powerful and All-Knowing Allah: it inculcates in him the sense of accountability for his actions in the Hereafter from which even death cannot release him. It fills him with obligation of obedience to Divine Law which is sure to follow true Faith. Then, it repeatedly warns him that *zinā* and unchastity are heinous crimes, which Allah will call to account with a severe reckoning. This theme occurs again and again in the Qur'ān. Moreover, Islam provides all possible facilities for a man to marry. If he is not satisfied with one wife, he is allowed to take up to four. If the husband and the wife cannot pull on amicably, there are provisions for separation. In case of a dispute between the two, provision exists for reconciliation through the intervention of the members of the family and failing that through the judicial courts so that they should either reconcile or separate and then remarry wherever they like. All this has been explained in Sūrahs Al-Baqarah, An-Nisā and At-Ṭalāq. In this Sūrah too, it is not considered good and right to remain unmarried and a clear Commandment has been given that marriages should be arranged between unmarried persons and even slaves (men and women) should not be allowed to remain unmarried. Then Islam puts an end to all those factors which allure a man to *zinā* or provide occasions for it. A year before the punishment for *zinā* was prescribed, women were commanded (in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb) to cover themselves with sheets and lower their head-covers over their faces when going out of their houses. The wives of the Holy Prophet (Allah's peace be upon him), who were

a model for every Muslim family, were ordered to restrict themselves to their houses with decorum and dignity and not to display their charms and adornments. Moreover, they were required to communicate with men from behind the curtain if there be any need for that. This was a model which was followed by all the believing women who considered the Prophet's wives and daughters patterns of virtue and not the immodest women of the age of 'ignorance'. Similarly, the free mixing of the men and women was discouraged before it was declared as a criminal offence and women were prohibited from going out openly in make-ups.

After adopting such measures *zinā* was declared to be a punishable offence and spreading of indecency in any way was also prohibited. Prostitution was legally banned and severe punishment was prescribed for charging men and women with adultery and propagating it without proof. Men were enjoined to restrain their gaze so that unrestricted feasting of eyes should not lead to lust for beauty and further on to illicit love. At the same time women were also enjoined to differentiate between *maḥram* and non-*maḥram* relatives.¹ This enables one to understand the entire scheme of reform, a constituent part of which is the prescribed punishment for *zinā*. This extreme punishment is for those incorrigible persons who persist in resorting to the illegal course for the gratification of their sex desires in spite of all the measures adopted to reform the individual and society. They certainly deserve to be flogged. Punishment of a wicked person serves as a psychological deterrent for those who have similar tendencies. This punishment is not merely a punishment for the criminal but is a declaration of the policy that the Islamic society has no room for debauchery and people cannot be allowed to live lives of indulgence and pleasures without restraint. If one tries to understand the Islamic scheme of reform from this point of view, one will realize that not a single part of the law can either be dispensed with or amended. Only a fool who assumes the role of a self-styled reformer, without understanding this Divine Law, will ever think of changing it, or a mischievous person, who deliberately wants to alter the very object of the social order designed by Allah, will try to tamper with it.

(5) *Zinā* was declared a culpable act in the third year of Hijrah, but it was not a "legal" crime at that time; as such the police and the courts were not competent to initiate legal proceedings. It was considered as a social crime against the institution of family. Accordingly the members of the family themselves were competent to punish the accused. The Commandment at that time was that if four men should bear witness to having seen a man and a woman committing *zinā*, both the culprits should get a beating and the woman should be imprisoned

1. *Maḥram* relatives are those between whom marriage is not permissible under the Islamic Law, e.g. father and daughter, uncle and niece, nephew and aunt, and so on. Non-*maḥram* are those between whom marriage is permissible, e.g. cousins, etc.

in the house. But at the same time there was a suggestion that this Commandment would apply till further orders and that the real law was yet to follow. (Sec IV: 15). After about two to three years the present Commandment was revealed which cancelled the previous Commandment and declared *zinā* to be a cognizable offence.

(6) The punishment prescribed in this verse (2) is for sexual intercourse between unmarried persons; it does not apply to illicit intercourse after marriage, which is a much graver offence under the Islamic Law. This thing is implied in verses 15 and 25 of An-Nisā (IV) that the punishment being prescribed is for the unmarried offenders :

“If any of your women are guilty of indecency, call four witnesses from among yourselves to testify this. If they give evidence and prove the guilt, then confine them to their houses until death comes to them, or Allah opens some other way out for them.” (IV: 15).

“Whoso cannot afford to marry free Muslim women, he should marry one of the Muslim slave-girls in your possession; Allah has full knowledge of your Faith. You all belong to one and the same Community; therefore you may marry them with the permission of their guardians and give them their dowries so that they may live a decent life in wedlock and not in licentiousness nor may have secret illicit relations. Then if they are guilty of indecency, after they have been fortified by wedlock, they shall be given half the punishment prescribed for free women.” (IV: 25).

Verse 15 held out a hope that Allah would open some other way out for those adulterous women who were to be imprisoned according to the Commandment contained in it. Thus, the Commandment in verse 2 of this Sūrah is the same which was promised in IV: 15. Then in IV: 25 the punishment for a married slave-girl guilty of adultery has been prescribed. The word *muḥṣanāt* has been used twice in the same verse in the same context and one will have to concede that it has been used in the same sense at both the places. Now let us consider the sentence: “Whoso cannot afford to marry free Muslim women (*muḥṣanāt*)....” Obviously a *muḥṣanah* cannot mean a married woman; it can only mean an unmarried woman of a free family. Then at the end of the verse it has been enjoined that if a slave woman commits adultery after her marriage, she should be given half the punishment prescribed for a free unmarried woman. The context clearly indicates that in this sentence the word *muḥṣanāt* has the same meaning as in the first sentence, i.e. an unmarried woman, who enjoys the protection of a free family. Thus it is concluded from these two verses of An-Nisā that the Commandment contained in this verse of An-Nūr is the same that was promised in v. 15 of An-Nisā and it prescribes punishment for sexual intercourse between unmarried persons. (Also see E. N. 46 of An-Nisā).

(7) As regards the punishment for adultery after marriage, the Qur'ān does not mention it, but it has been prescribed in the Traditions. We learn from many authentic Traditions that not only did the Holy Prophet prescribe the punishment of stoning to death for it verbally but also enforced it practically in several cases. Then after him his successors not only enforced this punishment during their caliphates but also declared repeatedly that this was the legal punishment. The Companions and their followers were unanimous on this point and there is not a single saying of anyone to suggest that anybody doubted the authenticity of this law during that period. After them the jurists of all ages and countries have been unanimous that this is the legal punishment prescribed by the *Sunnah*, for there have been so many strong and continuous proofs of its authenticity that no scholar can refute them. In the entire history of the Muslims nobody ever denied this except the Kharijites and some Mu'tazilites and even they did not deny it on the ground that there was some weakness in the proof of its having been enjoined by the Holy Prophet, but because they considered it to be "against the Qur'ān". This was, however, due to their lack of understanding the Qur'ān. They argued that by using the words *Az-zānī waz-zāniyatu* in their general sense the Qur'ān has prescribed a punishment of one hundred stripes for this crime. Therefore, according to them, the only punishment for adultery (or fornication) prescribed in the Qur'ān was this, and to prescribe a different punishment for the married persons who committed adultery would be against the Divine Law. But they forgot that the explanation of the Qur'ānic verses by the Holy Prophet carries the same weight and authority in law as the words of the Qur'ān itself, provided that the explanation is proved to be from the Holy Prophet. The Qur'ān has used *As-sāriqu was-sāriqatu* in similar general terms and prescribed the punishment of amputation of hands for the thief, both male and female. Now if this Commandment were to be interpreted literally without the limitations authentically emanating from the Holy Prophet, the generality of the words used would demand that every man or woman, who steals a needle or a plum, should be declared to be a thief and his or her hand cut off from the shoulder. On the other hand, if a thief, who has stolen a million rupees, declares on his arrest that he has reformed himself and has repented of theft, he should be let off in accordance with: "But whoso repents after his iniquity and reforms himself, Allah will surely turn towards him with His favour." (IV: 39).

Likewise the Qur'ān forbids marriage only with a foster mother and a foster sister. According to their argument, such a ban should not apply to a foster daughter. The Qur'ān forbids a person to keep two sisters as wives at one and the same time; therefore if a person keeps the aunt (paternal or maternal) and her niece together as wives, he should not be charged with violating the Qur'ānic injunction. Again, the Qur'ān

forbids marriage with a step-daughter only when she has been brought up in the house of her step-father; therefore, according to their way of reasoning, the absolute prohibition of marriage with a step-daughter should be regarded as against the Qur'ān. Similarly the Qur'ān allows mortgage only when a man is on a journey and nobody is available to prepare the loan documents; therefore if a person is at home and a scribe is also available, mortgage should be regarded as un-Qur'ānic. Then, the Qur'ān enjoins in general terms: "You should have witnesses whenever you buy or sell goods." Therefore, according to them, all sales and purchases taking place in the markets without witnesses should be unlawful.

These few instances should suffice to prove the error in the reasoning of those who hold the Commandment of stoning to death as against the Qur'ān. Nobody can deny the position and authority of the Prophet in the legal system of Islam. It is he alone who can explain the underlying intention of a Divine Command, its procedures and in what cases it will be applicable and in what there is another injunction. To deny this position and authority of the Prophet is not only against the principles of Islam but it also entails innumerable complications in practice.

(8) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists about the legal definition of *zinā*. According to the Ḥanafīs, it means frontal sexual intercourse of a man with a woman who is neither his wife nor his bondwoman, nor is there any valid reason to believe that the sexual act was committed under the misapprehension that the woman was his own wife or his own bondwoman. According to this definition, sexual act with a woman in the rectum, or sodomy, or sex gratification with animals, does not constitute *zinā*. It is confined only to the frontal sexual intercourse with a woman without any legal right or any doubt thereof. According to the Shāfi'īs, *zinā* means insertion of the male sexual organ into the female sexual part, which though forbidden by law may be quite natural. According to the Mālikīs, *zinā* means the entry of the male sexual organ into the frontal sexual part, or in the rectum of a woman or man, without legal right or any doubt about its being legal. According to these two definitions, sodomy also will be included in *zinā*. The correct position, however, is that these definitions are removed from the common meaning of *zinā*. The Qur'ān always employs words in their ordinary meaning and according to their common usage, unless it uses a certain word as a term. In such a case the Qur'ān itself makes plain the particular sense of the term. In the context in which the word *zinā* occurs, there is no indication that it has been used in any particular sense. Accordingly the word will have to be taken in the sense in which it is commonly understood. It is, therefore, confined to an illicit intercourse with a woman in the natural way and does not extend to other forms of sexual gratification. Besides, it is well known that there was a difference of opinion about the punishment for sodomy among the Companions of the Holy Prophet. Had sodomy

been included in *zinā* according to the Islamic terminology, there would have been no occasion for such a difference of opinion.

(9) Penetration of the glans of the penis is a sufficient legal ground for punishing the act of *zinā*. It is not essential that the penetration should be full or the sexual intercourse should be complete. On the other hand, if there is no penetration of the glans of the penis, mere lying of the couple in the same bed or their caressing each other or their being found naked, is not a sufficient ground for declaring them to be guilty of *zinā*; so much so that the Islamic Law does not bother to get the couple medically examined to establish their guilt of illicit sexual intercourse and then to get them punished according to the law. Those who are found in such an indecent condition are offenders and punishable according to the circumstances. The competent authority to determine the nature of the punishment is either a court or the legislature of the Islamic State. If the punishment is to be given in the form of flogging with stripes, it should not exceed ten stripes as specified in a Tradition: "Except in cases where a specific punishment has been prescribed by Allah, none should be flogged with more than ten stripes for any offence." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd). However, if a person is not caught red-handed but confesses his guilt himself, he should only be admonished to repent. According to a Tradition reported by 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, a man came to the Holy Prophet and said, "I did everything with a woman except the sexual intercourse, outside the city. Now you may give me any punishment you may deem fit." Hadrat 'Umar said, "When Allah had concealed it, you also should have kept it concealed." The Holy Prophet, however, remained silent and the man went away. Then the Holy Prophet called him back and recited the following verse to him:

"Establish *ṣalāt* at the two ends of the day and in early part of the night; indeed virtues remove evils." (XI: 114) At this a man asked, "Does the Commandment apply to him alone?" The Holy Prophet replied: "No, it is for all." (Muslim, Tirmizi, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī).

Not only this: The Islamic Law does not permit that in cases where a man confesses his guilt without specifying his offence, any investigation be made to find out what the actual offence was. A man came to the Holy Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I deserve the prescribed punishment, so enforce the punishment on me." The Holy Prophet did not ask him what punishment he deserved. After the man had offered his prayers, he again came and said, "I am guilty: please punish me." The Holy Prophet asked: "Have you not offered your prayer with us?" When he replied in the affirmative, the Holy Prophet said: "Well Allah has pardoned your sin." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad).

(10) The mere fact that a person (man or woman) has committed *zinā*, is not enough to declare him guilty of it. For this there are certain conditions which must be satisfied. These conditions are different for fornication and for adultery. In the case of fornication, the offender should be of age and possessing normal common sense. If a child or a lunatic is guilty of it he does not incur the punishment prescribed for *zinā*. In the case of adultery, there are some additional conditions which are as under :

(a) There is unanimity of opinion that the offender must be a free person and not a slave. The Qur'ān itself has indicated that a slave shall not be stoned to death on the charge of *zinā*. As has already been stated, a slave-girl, if found guilty of adultery after marriage, shall get half the punishment prescribed for a free unmarried woman. The jurists are agreed that the same Qur'ānic Law will apply to a slave.

(b) The criminal must be a legally married person. This condition has also the unanimous support of all the jurists. According to this condition, a man who has had sexual intercourse with a slave-girl, or whose marriage was performed in an illegal manner, will not be treated as married and shall not be stoned to death but will be flogged with stripes if he commits *zinā*.

(c) Such a person should not only have been legally married but must have had sexual intercourse with his wife after marriage. The mere ceremony of marriage does not entitle a man or a woman to be regarded as a *muḥṣin* or a *muḥṣanah* and be stoned to death in case of *zinā*. Most of the jurists are agreed on this condition. However, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Muḥammad have added a supplementary condition to the effect that a man or a woman will be treated as married only when he or she is a free person and is of age and possesses normal common sense at the time of marriage and sexual intercourse. According to this supplementary condition, if a man is married to a slave-girl, or to a minor or mad girl, and even has had sexual intercourse with her, he will not be punishable by stoning to death if found guilty of *zinā*. The same applies to the case of a woman who may have had intercourse with a slave or a mad or immature husband. She will not be stoned to death if found guilty of *zinā*. This is a very reasonable addition by these two far-sighted scholars.

(d) The criminal should be a Muslim. But Imām Shāfi'i, Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Aḥmad have disputed this. According to them, even if a non-Muslim married person, who is a protege of the Islamic State, is found guilty of *zinā*, he will be stoned to death. But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik have concurred that the punishment of stoning to death for adultery after marriage, applies only to the Muslims. The most weighty argument advanced in this connection is that a man, who is to be given the extreme punishment of stoning to death, should be the one who, in spite of enjoying the complete state of *iḥṣān* does not

refrain from committing adultery. The Arabic word *iḥṣān* means "moral fortification," which has three essential components. First, the man should be a believer in Allah and in the accountability after death and should owe allegiance to Divine Law. Second, he should be a free member of society and not a slave of somebody, which might hinder him from satisfying his desires in a lawful manner, and his helplessness and indigence should make him commit a sin when there is no family to help him in protecting his morality and honour. Third, he should be married and should have the means of satisfying his sex desires lawfully. Where these three components exist, the moral fortification would be complete and anybody who breaks through these three fortifications for the sake of illicit sex gratification, would really deserve the extreme penalty of being stoned to death. But in a case where the very first and foremost component of belief in Allah, in the Hereafter and in Divine Law, does not exist, the fortification is not complete, and accordingly, the gravity of the guilt is not such as to entail the extreme punishment. This is supported by a Tradition related by Ibn 'Umar and cited by Ishāq bin Rahaviāh in his Musnad and Daraquṭni in his Sunan : "Whoever is guilty of *shirk*, he is not *muḥṣan* (morally fortified)". There is, however, a difference of opinion whether Ibn 'Umar has quoted this as a saying of the Holy Prophet or as his own verdict. In spite of this lacuna, the principle is very strong and sound in its theme.

It will not be correct to counteract the above argument by a deduction from the case brought by the Jews to the Holy Prophet in which he ordered the stoning of a person guilty of *zinā*. This is because all the authentic reports about the case show that it was not the Islamic Law of the land which was applied, but the punishment was awarded on the basis of the Jewish personal law itself. According to a Tradition cited by both Bukhāri and Muslim, when this case was brought before the Holy Prophet, he asked : "What is the punishment for this offence in your Torah?" When it was confirmed that the Torah prescribed stoning, the Holy Prophet said : "I pass the same judgment as has been prescribed in the Torah." According to another Tradition, at the time of the judgment the Holy Prophet remarked : "O Allah, I am the first man to revive Thy Commandment which they (the Jews) had rendered null and void." (Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Aḥmad).

(11) In order to hold a person guilty of *zinā* as punishable, it is necessary to prove that he committed the act of his own free will. If a person is forced to commit the act under compulsion or pressure, he or she is neither an offender nor liable to any punishment. This is not only based on the general principle of the *Shari'ah* that a person cannot be held responsible for acts done under compulsion, but this is also in accordance with the Qur'ānic Law. In the subsequent verses of this Sūrah the Qur'ān proclaims pardon for those women who are forced

into prostitution. It has also been made clear in the various Traditions that in a case of rape only the man was punished and the woman, who had been violated, was let off. According to a Tradition cited by Tirmizi and Abū Da'ūd, a woman went out in darkness for prayers, when on the way she was overpowered by a man and raped. She raised a hue and cry and the adulterer was caught red-handed and stoned to death by the order of the Holy Prophet, but the woman was let off. According to a Tradition in Bukhārī, a man raped a girl during the Caliphate of Ḥadrat 'Umar, who had the man flogged with stripes and let the girl off. It is clear from these instances that there is unanimity of opinion about the law in regard to the case of a woman raped or forced into prostitution. However, there is a difference of opinion in respect of the man who commits the act under compulsion and coercion. Imām Abū Yūsūf, Imām Muḥammad, Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Ḥasan bin Ṣāliḥ express the opinion that the man too, who is forced to commit *zinā*, under pressure, will be pardoned. Imām Zufar is of the opinion that he will not be let off because the act of *zinā* could not have been performed unless the male organ was fully excited, which means that his own lust and sex desire had urged him to commit the act. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says that if the act is done under coercion, of the government or any of its officials, the man will not be punished because when the government itself compels a man to commit it, it has no right to punish him. But if somebody else compels him to it, the adulterer will be punished because he could not have committed this without his own desire for it, as sexual lust cannot be aroused by coercion. Of the three opinions, the first one is convincing. This is because even if erection of the male organ is a proof of the sexual urge of the man, it is not necessarily a proof of his willing participation in the act. Suppose, for example, that a tyrant imprisons a simple God-fearing man and puts a beautiful young woman stripped naked in the same cell and does not want to release him until he commits *zinā* and the tyrant brings four witnesses to prove it in the court, it will not be justice to stone them to death or flog them with stripes in utter disregard of the circumstances. This is because there is a probability that circumstances may be created whereby sexual desire may overpower a man even though he may not be a willing partner. Supposing a man were imprisoned and not given anything to drink except wine; then if he drinks it, will he be punished simply because not a single drop of wine could have gone down his throat if he did not intend it, even though he was forced by the circumstances to drink it? For in order to establish a guilt, mere existence of intention is not enough, but it is also necessary to see that the person was in a position to exercise his free will. Therefore, if a person is placed in such circumstances that he is compelled to commit a crime, he will not be a real culprit in some cases, and in some his offence will be very light.

(12) The Islamic Law does not confer on anybody the authority except the government to sit in judgment against the man or the woman

accused of *zinā* and none except an Islamic court has the authority to punish them. There is a complete consensus of all the jurists that in verse 2 the Commandment, "flog them with stripes", is not addressed to the common people but to the officials and judges of an Islamic government. There is, however, a difference of opinion whether the owner of a slave is competent to punish him or not. According to the Ḥanafī scholars, he is not, but according to the Shāfi'īs he is. The Mālikīs hold that the owner has no right to cut the hand in case of theft, but in case of *zinā*, calumny and drinking of wine, he can enforce the prescribed punishments.

(13) Under the Islamic Law the punishment for *zinā* is a part of the law of the land. Accordingly it will apply to all people in the Islamic State whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. Probably none of the jurists except Imām Mālik has differed with this opinion. As regards the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that a non-Muslim guilty of *zinā* should not be stoned to death, it is not based on the reason that a non-Muslim is not a complete *muḥsin*, which is one of the conditions of stoning for *zinā*, for this condition is not satisfied unless one is a Muslim. On the other hand, Imām Mālik says that a non-Muslim should not be stoned to death because the Commandment is a part of the Muslim personal law and the addressees are the Muslims and not the non-Muslims. As for the foreigner who has entered an Islamic State with due permission and is found guilty of *zinā*, he should also be stoned according to Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Abū Yūsuf, but according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Muḥammad he cannot be given the prescribed punishment.

(14) The Islamic Law does not make it obligatory that a person must confess his guilt of *zinā*, or those who have knowledge of it must inform the authorities about it. But in case his guilt comes to the notice of the authorities, there is then no room for pardoning the guilt. This is based on a Tradition of the Holy Prophet : "If any of you is guilty of any immorality, he should better remain hidden under the curtain of Allah, but if he discloses it to us, we shall certainly enforce the Law of Allah on him." According to a Tradition of Abū Da'ūd, when Mā'iz bin Mālik Aslamī committed the crime of *zinā*, he, on the advice of Hazzāl bin Nu'aim, went before the Holy Prophet and confessed his guilt. The Holy Prophet ordered that he should be stoned to death, but at the same time he said to Hazzāl : "Would that you had kept the matter hidden : this would have been better for you." In another Tradition cited in Abū Da'ūd and Nasā'ī, the Holy Prophet said : "You should yourselves pardon the crimes which merit prescribed punishments because when a crime which calls for such a punishment comes to my notice, it will be come obligatory on me to award the punishment."

(15) Under the Islamic Law *zinā* is not a compoundable crime. This is based on a Tradition which has been cited in almost all the collection of Ḥadīth. A boy who was working as a labourer in a certain house

committed *zinā* with the wife of his employer. The father of the boy gave 100 goats and one slave-girl to the man and made a compromise with him. But when the case came before the Holy Prophet, he said : "The goats and the slave-girl are yours and they are returned to you." Then he awarded the prescribed punishment to both the guilty ones. This shows that the crime of *zinā* is not compoundable and that under the Islamic Law, an outraged chastity cannot be compensated in terms of money. This shameless conception of monetary compensation for outraged modesty is a part of Western laws only.

(16) The Islamic government shall not take action against anybody for *zinā* unless it is fully proved. If the guilt is not proved, the authorities cannot pass orders for punishment even if they have the knowledge of the crime through many other sources. There was a woman in Al-Madīnah who openly practised prostitution according to Traditions cited in Bukhārī and Ibn Mājah, but in spite of this no punishment was given to her as there was no proof of *zinā* against her; so much so that the Holy Prophet once uttered the following words about her :

"If I were to stone anybody to death without a proof, I would have certainly got this woman stoned."

(17) The first possible proof of *zinā* is that proper evidence should be established against the criminal. The important components of the law are :

(a) The Qurān explicitly ordains that there should at least be four eye-witnesses to prove the guilt. This has been stated in An-Nisā (IV) : 15, and in this Sūrah An-Nūr too, it has been reiterated twice (vv. 4, 13). A judge is not authorized to decide the case on the basis of his own knowledge even if he has seen with his own eyes the couple committing the crime.

(b) The witnesses should be reliable according to the Islamic Law of Evidence, which requires that they should not have been proved to be false witnesses on any previous occasion : they should not be dishonest, they should not be previous convicts, and there should be no proof of their having any personal grudge against the accused, etc. In short, no one can be stoned nor flogged with stripes on the basis of unreliable evidence.

(c) The witnesses should give evidence to the effect that they saw the man and the woman in the actual state of intercourse, i.e. the union was complete such as a piston in a cylinder, and a rope in a well.

(d) The witnesses should be unanimous in regard to the time, the place and the persons committing the crime. Any difference in these basic things will nullify their testimony.

These conditions amply indicate that the Islamic Law does not intend to punish people as a matter of course. It inflicts severe punishment only when, in spite of all the measures to reform and eradicate the evil,

there still exists a shameless couple in the Islamic society who-commits the crime in a way as to be witnessed by as many as four men.

(18) There is a difference of opinion as to whether pregnancy by itself in a free woman, when she has no known husband, or in a slave-girl, when she has no known master, is a sufficient circumstantial evidence for the establishment of the crime of *zinā*. According to Ḥadrat 'Umar, this is a sufficient evidence, and the Mālikīs have adopted it. But the majority of the jurists are of the opinion that mere pregnancy is not a sufficient ground for stoning or flogging anybody with a hundred stripes. It is imperative that such a serious punishment should be based either on the evidence or on the confession of guilt. One of the basic principles of the Islamic Law is that the benefit of doubt should go to the accused. This is supported by a Tradition of the Holy Prophet : "Avoid punishments wherever you find scope for it." (Ibn Mājah). In another Tradition, he said : "Try to avoid punishing the Muslims wherever possible and if there is a way for an accused to escape punishment, let him off. An error of judgment in letting off an accused is better than in punishing him." (Tirmizi) According to this principle, the existence of pregnancy is not a definite proof of *zinā*, however strong it may be for doubt. For there is a possibility that in one out of a million cases the semen of a man may enter the womb of a woman somehow or other without any sexual intercourse and make her pregnant. Even such a slight possibility of doubt should be enough to spare the accused of the horrible punishment for *zinā*.

(19) There is also a difference of opinion as to whether the witnesses will be punished for falsely accusing a person in case their evidence differs from one another, or if they are not able to prove the guilt. According to a section of the jurists they will be regarded as *qāzif* (one who makes a false accusation as a slanderer), and will be punished with 80 stripes each. Others say that they should not be punished because they came as witnesses and not as plaintiffs. Moreover, if the witnesses are to be punished like this, nobody will come forward as a witness in cases involving *zinā*. This is because in that case no one will volunteer to appear as a witness at the risk of punishment, for nobody can be certain that all the four witnesses will be unanimous in their evidence. We consider this second opinion as more rational, for the benefit of doubt should also accrue to the witnesses as it does to the accused. Therefore, if lapse in their testimony cannot result in the extreme punishment to the accused, it should also not result in any punishment to the witnesses branding them as false witnesses, unless of course, their falsehood is clearly proved. In support of the first opinion, two strong arguments are offered :

First, the Qur'ān holds false accusation about *zinā* as a punishable offence. But this argument is incorrect because the Qur'ān makes a distinction between the *qāzif* (the slanderer) and the *shāhid* (one who

appears in a court as an eyewitness). An eyewitness cannot be branded as a slanderer merely because the court did not hold his evidence as a sufficient proof of the crime.

The second argument is based on the case of Mughīrah bin Shu'bah, in which Ḥadrat 'Umar punished Abū Bakrah and the other two eyewitnesses on the charge of false accusation. A critical study of the entire case shows that this precedent is not applicable to every case where the crime is not proved by proper evidence.

The facts of the case are that Mughīrah bin Shu'bah, the Governor of Baṣrah, did not have good relations with Abū Bakrah, whose house was opposite to his house across the same street. One day the windows of the two houses were opened by a strong current of wind. When Abū Bakrah got up to close his window, he saw through the opposite window across the street Mughīrah in a state of actual sexual intercourse. He asked three of his friends (Nāf'i bin Kaladah, Ziād and Shibl bin Ma'bad) who were also sitting with him to stand up and witness what Mughīrah was doing. The friends asked him who was the woman. Abu Bakrah said that she was Umm Jamīl. The next day a complaint to this effect was sent to Ḥadrat 'Umar, who immediately suspended Mughīrah and appointed Abū Mūsā Ash'arī as Governor of Baṣrah. Mughīrah along with the witnesses was called to Al-Madīnah. When they were asked about the case, Abū Bakrah said that they had seen Mughīrah actually committing sexual intercourse with Umm Jamīl, but Ziād said that the woman was not clearly visible and that he could not say definitely whether it was Umm Jamīl or not. During the cross examination, Mughīrah proved that they could not have seen the woman distinctly from the place where they were standing. He also proved that there was a close resemblance between his wife and Umm Jamīl. Besides this, circumstantial evidence also showed that during the Caliphate of Ḥadrat 'Umar, the governor of a province could not have committed this crime in his official residence, especially when his wife was also living with him. Thus the supposition of Abū Bakrah and his companions that Mughīrah was having sexual intercourse with Umm Jamīl, instead of his own wife, was nothing but a mis-placed suspicion. It was for this reason that Ḥadrat 'Umar not only acquitted the accused but also punished Abū Bakrah, Nāf'i and Shibl as slanderers. It is obvious that this isolated decision was based on the specific circumstances of the case and not on the principle that the witnesses must be punished when they are not able to prove the charge by their evidence. (For details of this case, see *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Ibn al-'Arabi, Vol. II, pp. 88, 89).

(20) Besides the evidence, the other thing by which the offence of *zinā* can be established, is the confession of the accused himself. This confession must be in clear and plain words and the guilty one must confess that he committed *zinā* with a woman who was unlawful for him. He should also admit that the act of *zinā* was complete in every respect.

The court must satisfy itself that the guilty person is confessing his guilt voluntarily without any external pressure and that, at the time of confession, he is in his right senses. Some jurists hold that one confession is not enough and that the guilty one must make four separate confessions. This is the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Abī Lailā, Ishāq bin Rahaviāh and Ḥasan bin Ṣāliḥ. But according to Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi'ī, 'Uthmān al-Battī, only one confession is enough. In cases where the conviction is based on the confession of the guilty person himself without the support of any other proof, the infliction of punishment should be suspended if during the course of punishment the guilty one retracts his confession. It does not matter even if it is quite evident that he is retracting his confession in order to escape the torture of punishment. This entire law is based on the precedents which have been cited in the Traditions in the various cases of *zinā*.

The most important case is that of Mā'iz bin Mālik Aslamī, which has been related by a large number of reporters on the authority of many Companions of the Holy Prophet (Allah's peace be upon him) and almost all books of Traditions contain details with regard to it. Mā'iz was an orphan boy from the clan of Aslam who had been brought up by Hazzāl bin Nu'aim. He committed *zinā* with a freed slave-girl. Hazzāl said to him, "Go to the Holy Prophet and inform him of your sin; may be he prays for your forgiveness." Mā'iz went before the Holy Prophet in the Mosque and said, "I have committed *zinā*; please purify me." The Holy Prophet turned his face away from him and said, "Woe be to you, go back and pray to Allah for forgiveness." But the boy again appeared before the Holy Prophet and said the same thing and the Holy Prophet again turned his face away. The boy then repeated his offence for the third time and the Holy Prophet again turned his face away. Ḥadrat Abū Bakr warned the boy that if he confessed the crime for the fourth time, the Holy Prophet would get him stoned. But the boy persisted and repeated the same thing again. At this the Holy Prophet turned to him and said: "You might have only kissed or embraced or caressed her, or you might have looked at her with lust (and you thought it was an act of *zinā*)." The boy said, "No." The Holy Prophet asked, "Did you lie with her in the same bed?" The boy replied in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet again asked: "Did you have sexual intercourse with her?" The boy again replied in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet then inquired in the most explicit Arabic expression specifically used for this act. Such a naked expression had never before been heard nor was ever heard afterwards from him. Had it not been the question of the life of an individual, the Holy Prophet would never have uttered such words. But the boy again replied in the affirmative to this explicit question. The Holy Prophet then asked: "Did you commit the act in such a manner that your male organ disappeared in her female part?" The boy answered, "Yes." Again he was asked whether the act was as complete as is a piston in a cylinder and a rope in a well. The boy again

answered in the affirmative. Again he was asked whether he really understood what *zinā* meant, and the boy said, "Yes, I have committed the same act with her illegitimately which a husband commits legitimately with his wife." The Holy Prophet asked: "Are you married?" He said, "Yes". Again the Holy Prophet asked whether he had taken any wine. He said, "No", and one of the Companions smelt his mouth and confirmed that he had not. After this the Holy Prophet inquired of his neighbours whether he was suffering from insanity. They replied that he had not exhibited any sign of insanity. Then the Holy Prophet said to Hazzāl: "Had you kept it secret, it would have been better for you." Then he ordered Mā'iz to be stoned to death and he was stoned to death outside the city. When they began to throw stones at him, Mā'iz tried to escape, and said, "O people, take me back to the Holy Prophet. The people of my clan deluded me, assuring that the Holy Prophet would not condemn me to death." But they did not let him escape. Afterwards when this incident was reported to the Holy Prophet, he said: "Why did you not let him off? Had you brought him to me, he might have repented and Allah might have accepted his repentance."

The second incident is of Ghāmidīyyah, who was a woman from the clan of Ghāmid, a branch of Juhainah tribe. She also confessed four times that she had committed *zinā* and had become pregnant as a result thereof. At her first confession, the Holy Prophet said: "Woe be to you, go back and ask forgiveness of Allah and repent." But she said, "O Messenger of Allah, do you want to put me off like Mā'iz? I am pregnant as a result of *zinā*." As there existed pregnancy along with the confession, the Holy Prophet did not cross examine her in detail as he did in the case of Mā'iz. He said to her, "Well, if you do not accept my counsel, go back and come to me after the birth of the child." After delivery had taken place, she came along with the child and said, "Please purify me now." The Holy Prophet said: "Go and suckle your child, and come to me after the suckling is over." She again came after the weaning of the child and brought a piece of bread with her. She fed the child with the piece of bread before the Holy Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah, now the child has been weaned and has started taking bread." At this the Holy Prophet entrusted the child to a person to bring it up and ordered the stoning of the woman.

In both these cases, four confessions have clearly been mentioned. According to a Tradition, cited by Buraidah in Abū Da'ūd, the Companions of the Holy Prophet, in general, held the opinion that if Mā'iz and Ghāmidīyyah had not confessed their guilt four times, they would not have been stoned to death. In the third incident of this nature (which has been mentioned in para 15 above), the only words used therein, as contained in other Traditions, were: "Go and inquire from his wife about this. If she confesses her guilt, stone her to death." There is no mention of four confessions here and it is on the basis of this that some jurists have argued that only one confession is enough.

(21) The three cases mentioned above clearly show that a guilty person, who confesses his sin, will not be questioned about the other person with whom he or she committed *zinā*. This is because in that case two persons shall have to be punished instead of one. The Islamic Law is not anxious to punish people. But if the guilty person names the other party to the crime, then that party will be interrogated and also punished in case of confession. But if the other party denies it, only the person confessing the guilt, will be punished. However, there is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether such a person will be punished for *zinā* or for false accusation. According to Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī, he will be awarded the prescribed punishment for *zinā*, because he has confessed that crime alone. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Auzā'ī, he shall be convicted as a false accuser, because the denial of the other party has made his crime of *zinā* doubtful but his guilt of false accusation stands proved anyhow. According to Imām Muḥammad and it is supported by a saying of Imām Shāfi'ī also, he will be punished for *zinā* as well as for slander. This is because he has confessed the guilt of *zinā* himself and has not been able to prove his accusation against the other party. A similar case was brought before the Holy Prophet. A Tradition to this effect cited in Musnad Aḥmad and in Abū Da'ūd by Sahl bin Sa'd contains these words : "A person confessed before the Holy Prophet that he had committed *zinā* with such and such a woman." The Holy Prophet inquired of the woman but she denied it. Then he gave him the prescribed punishment but forgave the woman. This Tradition, however, does not specify the punishment that was awarded. In another Tradition cited in Abū Da'ūd and Nasā'ī from Ibn 'Abbās, it has been stated that on the man's confession the Holy Prophet gave him the prescribed punishment for *zinā*. But when the woman denied it, the man was flogged with stripes for making a false accusation. But this Tradition is weak as regards its links, because one of its reporters, Qāsim bin Fayyāz, is not considered as reliable by many scholars of Traditions. Moreover, this Tradition appears to be opposed to reason because it cannot be expected of the Holy Prophet that he would first punish the man for *zinā* and then make an inquiry from the woman. Common sense and justice, which the Holy Prophet could not have overlooked, demanded that his case should not have been decided before making an inquiry from the woman. This is supported by a Tradition cited by Sahl bin Sa'd. Therefore, the second Tradition cannot be considered as reliable.

(22) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to what punishment should be given to the person who has been proved guilty of *zinā*. The various opinions in this regard are as under :

Punishment for married persons guilty of zina :

(a) According to Imām Aḥmad, Da'ūd Zāhirī and Ishāq bin Rahaviāh they shall be flogged with 100 stripes and then stoned to death.

(b) All other jurists are unanimous that they shall be stoned to

death ; stoning to death and flogging will not be combined together.

Punishment for unmarried persons :

(a) According to Imām Aḥmad, Imām Shāfi'ī, Da'ūd Zāhirī, Sufyān Thaurī, Ibn Abī Lailā and Ḥasan bin Ṣāliḥ, the punishment is flogging with 100 stripes and exile for one year both for the man and the woman.

(b) According to Imām Mālik and Imām Auzā'ī, the man should be flogged with 100 stripes and exiled for one year, while the woman should only be flogged with 100 stripes. (According to these jurists, "exile" means that the guilty one should be banished from his own habitation and sent to such a distant place where one has to shorten one's prayer. But according to Zaid bin 'Alī and Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq, imprisonment also serves the purpose of exile.)

(c) Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his disciples—Imām Abū Yūsuf, Imām Zufar and Imām Muḥammad—are of the opinion that the "ḥadd" (prescribed punishment) for *zinā* in such cases is only 100 stripes both for the man and for the woman. Any additional punishment, such as exile or imprisonment, is not "ḥadd" but *ta'zīr* (discretionary punishment). If the judge feels that the guilty man is of immoral character, or that the illicit relations of the guilty ones are too intimate, he may exile or imprisonment them as the occasion may demand. The difference between *ḥadd* and *ta'zīr* is that *ḥadd* is a specific punishment which must be inflicted provided that the guilt has been proved according to the conditions laid down in the *Sharī'ah*, whereas *ta'zīr* is a punishment which has not been specified by the *Sharī'ah* with regard to its nature and gravity, but is determined by the court in accordance with the circumstances of the case.

All the above different opinions have been based on various Traditions of the Holy Prophet, which are given below :

According to a Tradition related by 'Ubādah bin Ṣāmit and cited by Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah, Tirmizī and Imām Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet said : "Take it from me. Take it from me. Allah has prescribed the method for dealing with women guilty of *zinā*. An unmarried man committing *zinā* with an unmarried woman should get 100 stripes and one year's exile. The married man committing *zinā* with a married woman, should get 100 stripes and stoning to death." Though this Tradition is technically correct according to its authentic links, we learn from a large number of correct Traditions that it was neither acted upon during the time of the Holy Prophet nor during the rightly-guided Caliphate nor any jurist ever gave any verdict strictly in accordance with it.

According to a Tradition from Abū Hurairah and Zaid bin Ḳhālid Juhānī, which has been cited by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad, a case was brought by two Beduins before the Holy Prophet. One of them said, "My son, who worked as a labourer in the house of this man, got involved with his wife. I compromised with him by giving him 100 goats and one slave-girl, but I have been told by the scholars that this is against the Book of Allah

Please decide the case between us according to the Book of Allah." The second man also said the same thing and asked for the decision according to the Divine Book. The Holy Prophet said : "I will decide according to the Divine Book. You should take back your goats and the slave-girl. Your son shall get 100 stripes and a year's exile." Then the Holy Prophet said to a man from the clan of Aslam : "O Unais, go to this man's wife and inquire from her about this. If she confesses her guilt, stone her to death." The woman confessed the guilt and was stoned to death. It should be noted that in this Tradition there is no mention of flogging the married woman before stoning her to death, whereas the unmarried man, guilty of *zinā* with a married woman, was punished with flogging and exile.

Besides this, the accounts of the cases of *Mā'iz* and *Ghāmidīyyah*, which have been cited in the various books of Traditions, do not mention anywhere that the Holy Prophet ordered flogging of the guilty person before stoning him or her to death.

There is no Tradition in any book of Traditions to the effect that the Holy Prophet, in any case, combined flogging with stoning to death. In all the cases of *zinā* by married persons, he awarded the punishment of stoning to death only.

In his well-known address, cited by Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmizī and Nasā'ī on the authority of various reporters, Hadrat 'Umar declared most emphatically that the punishment for *zinā* after marriage is stoning to death. Imām Aḥmad also has cited various Traditions regarding this but in none of these there is any mention of flogging before stoning to death.

From among the rightly-guided Caliphs Hadrat 'Alī alone combined flogging with stoning to death in one case. Imām Aḥmad and Bukhārī have cited this case on the authority of 'Āmir Sha'bī that a woman named Shurāḥa confessed being pregnant as a result of illicit intercourse. Hadrat 'Alī got her flogged on Thursday and stoned to death on Friday, saying, "We flogged her according to the Book of Allah and stoned her to death in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet." There is no other case than this in which both the punishments were combined during the rightly-guided Caliphate.

According to a Tradition cited in Abū Da'ūd and Nasa'ī on the authority of Jābir bin 'Abdullah, a man committed *zinā* and the Holy Prophet awarded him the punishment of flogging. Afterwards when it came to be known that he was a married man, he ordered that he should be stoned to death. Besides this, we have already cited several other Traditions showing that the Holy Prophet awarded the punishment of flogging only to the unmarried persons guilty of *zinā*. For instance, the man who raped a woman while she was going out for prayers, and the man who confessed his crime of *zinā* but the woman did not, were given the punishment of flogging.

As regards "exile", the authority may use its own discretion. Ḥadrat 'Umar exiled Rabi'ah bin Umayyah bin Khalf on a charge of drinking and he fled and joined the Romans. At this Ḥadrat 'Umar said that in future he would not exile a man and a woman guilty of *zinā*, because he feared that there was a risk of mischief in it. (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 315).

In the light of these traditions and cases as a whole, it becomes quite plain that the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his disciples is correct : the punishment for a married man or woman for *zinā* is stoning to death alone while the punishment for unmarried persons is 100 stripes only. Flogging and stoning to death were never combined from the time of the Holy Prophet up to the Caliphate of Ḥadrat 'Uṭhmān. As for combining flogging and exile, it was practised on some occasions while on others it was not. This clearly establishes the correctness of the way of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

(23) The first reference to the nature of flogging with stripes is implied in the word *fajlidū* of the Qur'ān itself. The word *jald* is derived from *jild*, which means "skin". Accordingly all lexicographers and commentators have taken it to mean that flogging should be carried out in such a way that its effect should be confined to the skin only and should not reach the flesh under it. The flogging that causes deep wounds into the flesh or tears it up into pieces is against the Qur'ān.

The whip or the cane used for the purpose of flogging should be medium in all respects : it should neither be thick and hard nor thin and soft. According to a Tradition cited by Imām Mālik in *Mu'attā*, the Holy Prophet asked for a whip for flogging but as it had worn out owing to long use, he said : "Bring a harder one." Then a new whip was brought which was very hard because of lack of use. The Holy Prophet said : "Get me one between these two." Accordingly a whip was brought which had been used in riding and with it he gave the flogging. A similar tradition has also been cited by Abū 'Uṭhmān an-Nahdī about Ḥadrat 'Umar that he always used a medium whip. (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 322). A whip with knots or one having two or three prongs is also prohibited.

Flogging should also be of average intensity. Ḥadrat 'Umar used to instruct the flogger, "Strike in such a way that your armpit should not become visible during flogging," i.e., Do not stretch your arm fully to strike with full force. (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Ibn al-'Arabī, Vol. II, p. 84, and *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 322). All the jurists are agreed that :

- (a) the stripe should not be such as may cause a wound ;
- (b) the flogging should not be confined to one and the same place but should be spread over the whole body ;
- (c) the face and the private parts, and, according to the Ḥanafīs, the head also should be spared but all other parts should get some

flogging. Hadrat 'Alī once said to the flogger, "Let every part of the body get its due share except the face and the private parts." According to another tradition, he said, "Save the head and the private parts only." (*Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 321). The Holy Prophet has said: "When anyone of you is flogging, he should not strike on the face." (Abū Da'ūd).

While flogging, a man should be made to stand and a woman to sit. In the time of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Qāzī Ibn Abī Lailā of Kūfah got a woman flogged while she was standing. The Imām took a strong objection to it and openly declared it to be a wrong thing. Incidentally, this also throws light on Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's stand with regard to the law of the contempt of court. At the time of flogging, the woman should be in her full dress: her clothes should rather be tied down on her so that no part of her body might be exposed; her thick clothes only will be taken off; but in regard to a man, there is some difference of opinion. According to some jurists, he will be allowed to remain in his pyjamas only, and according to some others, the shirt will not be taken off. Hadrat Abū 'Ubaidah bin al-Jarrāḥ sentenced a person guilty of *zina* to be flogged. The man said, "This sinful body should get a severe flogging." Then he started taking off his shirt, but Abū 'Ubaidah said, "Do not let him take off his shirt." (*Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 322). During the time of Hadrat 'Alī, a man was flogged while he was wrapped in a sheet of cloth.

Flogging is prohibited in severe cold and in severe heat. In winter it should be done when it is hot and in summer when it is cool.

It is also not permissible to tie down a person at the time of flogging unless he tries to run away. According to 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, it is not permissible in the Islamic Community to flog anybody after stripping him naked or after tying him on a tripod.

Jurists have permitted that at least twenty stripes may be given daily but it is better to inflict full punishment at one and the same time.

Flogging should not be entrusted to uncouth, uncultured executioners, but it should be done by men of deep insight who understand how the flogging should be carried out in order to meet the requirements of the *Shari'ah*. Ibn Qayyim has cited in *Zād al-Ma'ād* that the Holy Prophet employed the services of such pious and respectable people as 'Alī, Zubair, Miqdād bin 'Amr, Muḥammad bin Maslamah, 'Āṣim bin Thābit and Daḥāk bin Sufyān for this purpose. (Vol. I, pp. 44, 45)

If the guilty person is suffering from some disease and there is no hope of his recovery or is too old, it is enough to strike him once with a branch of 100 twigs, or with a broom of 100 twigs in order to meet the requirements of the law. During the time of the Holy Prophet, an old man, who was suffering from some disease, was found guilty of *zina* and the Holy Prophet awarded him the same kind of punishment. (Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'i, Ibn Mājah). In the case of a pregnant woman, the

flogging will be postponed till the delivery and the complete discharge of blood after childbirth. But if she is to be stoned to death, the punishment will not be given till the child has been weaned.

If *zina* is proved by evidence, the flogging will be initiated by the witnesses themselves. If the punishment is based on confession, the judge himself will initiate the punishment. This is to make the witnesses and the judge realize the seriousness of the matter. In the case of Shurāḥa, when Ḥadrat 'Aī decided to stone her to death, he said, "Had there been any witness to this crime, he should have initiated the stoning, but as she is being punished on the basis of confession, I will initiate it myself." According to the Ḥanafīs, this procedure is essential but according to the Shāfi'īs, it is not essential; it is, however, preferable according to all jurists.

After examining the above details of the law of flogging, just consider the audacity of those who hold this punishment as barbarous. This accusation becomes all the more ridiculous when the same people allow a harsher punishment in their jails. According to the existing law, not only the court but an ordinary superintendent of the jail also is authorized to award a punishment of 30 stripes to a prisoner for disobedience or insolence, and this flogging is carried out by a specialist who keeps himself ready and fit by regular practice and the canes are wetted beforehand so that they may cut through the body like a knife. The convict is stripped off his clothes and nothing but a thin cloth wetted with tincture of iodine is left to cover his private parts. Then he is tied down to a tripod to prevent him from making any movement at the flogging and the flogger comes running from a distance and strikes him with full force. Every time the same part (buttocks) is struck so hard that the flesh flies out like minced meat and often the bones become bare. Often it so happens that even the strongest man does not stand 30 canes and becomes unconscious and it takes a long time before his wounds are healed. It is an irony that those people, who are themselves enforcing this 'civilized' punishment in jails today, have the cheek to call the punishment enjoined by Islam as "barbarous". Then the horrible tortures which are inflicted by their police not only on proved criminals but on suspects, especially those suspected of criminal crimes, are well known to everyone.

(24) After a convict has been stoned to death, he (or she) will be treated like any other Muslim: his (or her) body will be washed and shrouded: funeral prayer will be said in the Islamic way, and he (or she) will be buried with due respect in a Muslim graveyard. Prayers for his forgiveness will be offered and it will be improper for anyone to talk ill of him. According to Jābir bin 'Abdullah Anṣārī, as cited in Bukhārī, when Mā'iz bin Mālik was stoned to death, the Holy Prophet said good words about him and himself led his funeral prayer. A Tradition from Buraidah, as cited in Muslim, states that the Holy Prophet said: "Pray

for the forgiveness of Mā'iz bin Mālik: he has offered such a repentance that if it were to be distributed over a whole community, it would suffice for the forgiveness of all its people." In the same Tradition it has been mentioned that when Ghāmidīyah died due to stoning, her funeral prayer was led by the Holy Prophet. When Khālid bin Walīd talked ill of her, the Holy Prophet said: "Khālid, hold your tongue! I swear by Him Who controls my life that her repentance was such that even if a cruel tax-collector had offered such a repentance, he would have been forgiven." According to Abū Hurairah, as cited in Abū Da'ūd, after the stoning of Mā'iz one day when the Holy Prophet was walking along, he heard two men talking ill of Mā'iz. When he had gone a few paces further, he saw the dead body of a donkey. He stopped there and asked the two men: "Come on and eat something out of it." They said, "O Prophet of Allah, who can eat a dead donkey?" The Holy Prophet replied: "Talking ill of your own brother was much worse than eating a dead donkey."

According to a Tradition from 'Imrān bin Ḥuṣain cited in Muslim, when the funeral prayer of Ghāmidīyah was about to be offered, Ḥadrat 'Umar said to the Holy Prophet, "Are we going to offer funeral prayer for this adulteress?" The Holy Prophet said: "She has offered such a repentance that if it were to be distributed over the whole of the population of Al-Madīnah, it would suffice for their forgiveness." According to another Tradition from Abū Hurairah, cited in Bukhārī, when a man was being punished for drinking, somebody said, "May God defame him!" The Holy Prophet said: "Do not utter such words and thus help Satan against him." In Abū Da'ūd there is an addition to this, according to which the Holy Prophet said: "Pray like this: 'O Allah, pardon him and show mercy to him'."

This is the true spirit of punishment in Islam. Islam does not punish even the biggest criminal with vindictiveness but with the intention to reform him. That is why after the punishment, mercy and compassion are shown towards him. In contrast to this, the modern civilization adopts a very mean attitude towards those who are killed by the state military or police and whose death is upheld by a judicial inquiry. It is not tolerated that even somebody may carry his dead body to the graveyard or utter a good word about him. In the face of this behaviour, they have the "moral courage" (a euphemism for impudence) to preach tolerance to the world.

(25) As regards the law of punishment concerning *zinā* with prohibited relations, see E.N. 33 of An-Nisā (IV), and for the punishment of sodomy see E.N.'s 64-68 of A'arāf (VII). As regards the committal of this heinous act with animals, some jurists treat it as *zinā* and hold that the guilty person deserves the prescribed punishment of this crime. But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Yūsuf, Imām Muḥammad, Imām Zufar, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī hold that it is not *zinā*, and therefore, the offender should be given the discretionary punishment and not the

prescribed punishment. We have already stated that the discretionary punishment has been left to the judge, or if necessary the state legislature can devise some appropriate form of punishment for it.

3. The first thing that deserves attention in this verse is that the criminal law is being termed as the "Way of Allah". This shows that the "Way of Allah" does not merely consist in *Ṣalāt*, Fasting, *Hajj* and payment of *Zakāt* dues, but the law of the land is also a part of the "Way of Allah". The establishment of the "Way" does not mean the establishment of *Ṣalāt* alone but it also includes the establishment of the Divine Law and the system of law based on it. If these things are not established, the mere establishment of the system of *Ṣalāt* will be regarded as partial implementation of the "Way". But when instead of this an un-Islamic system of law is adopted, it amounts to the total rejection of the Divine Way itself.

The second thing which deserves attention is the warning from Allah that no feeling of compassion or pity should restrain you from inflicting the prescribed punishment on the guilty person. The same thing has been further elaborated by the Holy Prophet in the following Tradition:

"On the Day of Judgment, a judge who had reduced the punishment by one stripe in a certain case, will be called to account. He will be asked: 'Why did you do so?' He will say, 'It was out of pity for your people.' Allah will say: 'Well, it means you were more compassionate towards those people than Myself.' Then it will be ordered: 'Take him to Hell.' Another judge, who had enhanced the punishment by one stripe will be brought forth. He will be asked: 'Why did you do so?' He will say, 'It was done to serve as a deterrent for others.' Allah will say: 'Well, it means you were wiser than I with regard to them.' It will be ordered: 'Take him to Hell.' (*Tafsīr Kabīr*, Vol. VI, p. 225)

The above applies to the case when reduction or enhancement in the punishment was the result of compassion or some other factor. But if the quantum of punishments were to be changed according to the status of the culprit, it would constitute the worst type of crime. According to a Tradition related by *Hadrat 'Ā'ishah*, the Holy Prophet (Allah's peace be upon him) said in an address: "The communities before you perished because whenever anyone from among their aristocrats committed a theft, he was forgiven but whenever an ordinary man committed the same offence, he was awarded the prescribed punishment." According to another Tradition, the Holy Prophet said: "The enforcement of one prescribed punishment is more beneficial to the people than 40 days of rainfall." (*Nasā'ī*, *Ibn Mājah*)

Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that the culprit should neither be forgiven after his guilt has been proved nor his punishment reduced. He must be flogged with 100 stripes. Some others have taken it to mean that the flogging should not be so light that the culprit may not feel its effect at all. The verse covers both the above

interpretations and, in fact, both are plausible. It also means that the one guilty of fornication should get the same punishment which has been prescribed by Allah and no other type of punishment. It is a sin to inflict any other type of punishment instead of flogging even for the sake of compassion or pity. But if any other type of punishment is inflicted on the ground that flogging with stripes is a barbarous type of punishment, it amounts to '*kufr*', which should never be tolerated even for a moment by a true Believer. To believe in the Divinity of Allah and then to call Him a barbarian, suits only those who are the meanest of hypocrites.

4. The punishment should be awarded publicly so that, on the one hand, the guilty one may feel disgraced and, on the other, it may serve as a deterrent for the other people. This throws light on the concept of punishment in Islam. In verse 38 of *Al-Mā'idah* (V), in connection with the punishment of theft, it was said :

"...it is the recompense for what they have earned, and an exemplary punishment from Allah."

And now here it is being enjoined that the adulterer should be given the punishment publicly. This shows that in Islamic Law punishment is awarded to meet three purposes :

(a) To inflict pain on the criminal for the excesses he committed against the other person or society,

(b) To stop him from repeating the crime,

(c) To serve as a deterrent for others, so that the people having evil inclinations in society may be deterred and dare not commit such crimes again.

Another advantage of awarding the punishment publicly is that the officials concerned should not be able to reduce or enhance the punishment at will while executing it.

5. That is, only an adulterous woman is a fit match for an adulterous man who has not repented, or an idolatrous woman. No believing, virtuous woman can be a match for him. It is forbidden for the Believers that they should give their daughters in marriage to such wicked people knowing them to be so. Similarly the fit match for adulterous women (who have not repented) can only be adulterous or idolatrous men; they are not fit for any righteous Believer. It is forbidden for the Believers that they should marry women who are known to possess immoral character. This thing applies to those men and women who persist in their evil ways, and not to those who repent and reform themselves, for after repentance and reformation they will no longer be regarded as "adulterous."

According to Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, the prohibition of marriage with an adulterous man implies that such a marriage, if contracted, will have no legal effect. But this view is not correct. Prohibition does not have any legal implications. It cannot mean that if a person violates

this prohibition, the marriage will be void, and the parties concerned will be involved in *zinā* in spite of marriage. For the Holy Prophet has stated : "The unlawful does not make the lawful unlawful." (Ṭabarānī, Daraqutnī). In other words, an illegal act does not make a legal act also illegal. Therefore, if a person commits *zinā* and then marries, his conjugal relations with his spouse cannot be considered as *zinā*, because in that case the other party of the marriage contract who is not immoral, will also have to be considered as involved in *zinā*. As a rule, no illegal act except open rebellion can cause the one guilty of it to be declared an outlaw, so that no act of his can be regarded legal after that. If the verse is considered in this light the plain meaning would be this : It is a sin to select such persons for marriage as are known to be immoral. The Believers should shun them, otherwise they will feel encouraged, whereas the *Shari'ah* intends to segregate them as the undesirable and contemptible element of society.

Similarly this verse does not validate the marriage of an adulterous Muslim with an idolatrous woman and of an adulterous Muslim woman with an idolatrous man. The verse simply means to emphasize the act of *zinā*, and declares that the person who commits it being a Muslim, makes himself unfit for contracting a marriage in the pure and pious Muslim society. He should either approach the immoral people like himself for this purpose, or the idolatrous people who do not believe in the Divine Law at all.

The Traditions of the Holy Prophet on this subject are very clear and explicit. A Tradition has been cited in Musnad Aḥmad and Nasā'ī on the authority of 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'Ās, which says that a woman, Umm Mahzol by name, practised prostitution in Madīnah. When a Muslim asked the Holy Prophet's permission to marry her, he forbade him and recited this verse. According to a Tradition in Tirmizī and Abū Da'ūd, Marthad bin Abī Marthad, who was a Companion, had had illicit relations with 'Ināq, an immoral woman of Makkah, in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. Later on with a mind to marry her, he came to the Holy Prophet for permission. He asked his permission twice, but the Holy Prophet did not respond. When he asked for the third time, the Holy Prophet recited this verse in response. Besides these, there are several other Traditions which have been reported by Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Umar and 'Ammār bin Yāsir to the same effect. For example, the Holy Prophet said : "The man who knows that his wife is immoral, yet he continues to live with her, will not enter Paradise." (Aḥmad, Nasa'ī Abū Da'ūd Ṭiālisī). The policy followed by Ḥadrat Abū Bakr and Ḥadrat 'Umar was this that whenever they found an unmarried couple guilty of fornication, they would first award them the prescribed punishment of stripes and then would bind them in wedlock. Ibn 'Umar has reported that one day a man, in a troubled state of mind, came to Ḥadrat Abū Bakr. He wanted to say something but was not able to speak clearly.

Ḥadrat Abū Bakr asked Ḥadrat 'Umar to take him to one side and find out what he had to say. On inquiring, the man stated that a person who had visited him as a guest was found involved in fornication with his daughter. Thereupon Ḥadrat 'Umar said : "Woe be to you, why did you not keep the secret of your daughter hidden?" Consequently, the boy and the girl were tried, awarded the prescribed punishment, bound in wedlock and then exiled away from the city for a year. A few other incidents of the same nature have been related by Qāzī Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* Vol. II, p. 86.

6. The intention of this Command is to impose a complete ban on the publicity in society of the people's unlawful connections and illicit relationships, for it gives birth to innumerable evils. The foremost evil in this connection is that imperceptibly it creates and spreads an immoral atmosphere. One person describes another person's affairs, whether true or false, before others, and the others pass them on to still others with additions and suspicions. This gives a trend to the spread of evil passions in society. The *Shari'ah* intends to stop this evil. On the one hand, it enjoins that if a person is found involved in *zinā* and his guilt is established by evidence, he should be given the extreme punishment which is not given for any other crime; and, on the other, it says that if a person accuses another of *zinā* but is unable to prove his allegation, he should be awarded 80 stripes so that he does not utter such a slander in future. Even if the accuser is an eye-witness of an immoral act, he should keep the secret and let the filth remain where it is instead of causing it to spread. However, if he has witnesses, he should abstain from publicising the matter in society but should bring the case to the notice of the authorities and get the criminals duly punished by the court of law. Below we give the details of the law in serial order :

(1) The context in which the words *wallazina yarmūn-al-muḥṣanāt* (those who charge chaste women with false accusation) occur clearly shows that it does not imply any common sort of accusation but specifically the accusation of *zinā* against the chastity of pure women. Then the demand from the accusers to produce four witnesses in support of their accusation also shows that it relates to *zinā*, for in the entire Islamic Law producing four witnesses is the legal requirement only in a case of *zinā* and in no other matter. The scholars are, therefore, agreed that this verse describes the law relating to the accusation of *zinā*, which has been termed *qazf* for convenience so that this law is not extended to cover cases of other accusations like that of theft, drinking, taking of interest, etc. Apart from *qazf*, the question of determining punishments for other allegations can be left to the discretion of the judge, or to the consultative council of the Islamic State, who can make general laws to cover cases of contempt and defamation as and when required.

(2) Though the verse only mentions *al-muḥṣanāt* (pure and chaste women), the jurists are agreed that the law is not confined to the accusa-

tion in respect of women, but it extends to the accusation in respect of chaste men also. Likewise, though the masculine gender has been used for the accusers, the law is not confined to male accusers only but extends to female accusers as well. For as regards the gravity and wickedness of the crime, it does not make any difference whether the accuser or the accused is a man or a woman. Therefore in either case, the man or accuser or the woman accusing a virtuous and chaste man or woman of *zinā*, will be dealt with under this law.

(3) This law can be applied only in a case where the accuser has accused a *muḥṣan* or *muḥṣanah*, i.e., "a morally fortified" man or woman. In case the accused is not "morally fortified", the law cannot be applied. If a person who is not "morally fortified" is known for his immorality, there will be no question of the "accusation", but if he is not, the judge can use his discretion to award a punishment to the accuser, or the consultative council can make necessary laws to deal with such cases.

(4) For an act of *qazf* to be considered as punishable, it is not enough that somebody has accused somebody else of immorality without a proof, but there are certain conditions which have to be fulfilled in respect of the *qāzif* (accuser), *maqzūf* (the accused) and the act of *qazf* itself.

As for the *qāzif*, he should satisfy the following conditions :

(a) He should be an adult : if a minor commits the crime of *qazf* he can be given a discretionary punishment but not the prescribed punishment.

(b) He should possess normal common sense : an insane and mentally abnormal person cannot be given the prescribed punishment; similarly, a person under the influence of an intoxicant, other than a forbidden intoxicant, e.g., chloroform, cannot be considered as guilty of *qazf*.

(c) He should have committed *qazf* out of his own free will or choice, and not under duress.

(d) He should not be the father or grandfather of *maqzūf* (the accused), for they cannot be given the prescribed punishment.

According to the Ḥanafīs, the fifth condition is that the accuser should not be drunk, because the person who only gesticulates cannot be held guilty of *qazf*. But Imām Shāfi'ī disputes this. He says that if the gesticulation of the drunk person is clear and unambiguous by which everybody can understand what he wants to say, he will be considered as a *qāzif*, because his gesticulation is no less harmful to defame a person than the word of mouth. On the contrary, the Ḥanafīs do not hold mere gesticulation as a strong enough ground for awarding the prescribed punishment of 80 stripes; they, therefore, recommend a discretionary punishment for it.

The conditions to be satisfied by *maqzūf* (the accused) are as follows :

(a) He should be possessing normal common sense, i.e., he should be accused of having committed *zinā* while in the normal state of mind; the accuser of an insane person (who might or might not have become sane later) cannot be held guilty of *qazf*, for the insane person cannot possibly safeguard his chastity fully; and even if the evidence of *zinā* is established against him, he will neither become deserving of the prescribed punishment nor incur personal defamation; therefore, the one accusing him also should not be held as deserving of the prescribed punishment of *qazf*. However, Imām Mālik and Imām Laith bin Sa'd hold that the *qāzif* of an insane person deserves to be awarded the prescribed punishment of *qazf*, because he is accusing another person of *zinā* without a proof thereof.

(b) He should be an adult, i.e., he should be accused of having committed *zinā* while being of full age legally; accusing a minor, or a grown up person that he committed *zinā* when a minor, does not deserve the prescribed punishment, for, like an insane person, a child also cannot fully safeguard his honour and chastity. However, according to Imām Mālik, if a boy approaching the age of majority is accused of *zinā*, the accuser will not deserve the prescribed punishment, but if a girl of that age is accused of having submitted herself for *zinā*, when sexual intercourse with her is possible, her *qāzif* will deserve the prescribed punishment, for the accusation defames not only the girl's family but ruins the girl's future as well.

(c) He should be a Muslim, i.e., he should be accused of having committed *zinā* while in Islam. Accusing a non-Muslim, or a Muslim that he committed *zinā* when a non-Muslim, does not entail the prescribed punishment.

(d) He should be free; accusing a slave or a slave-girl, or a free person that he committed *zinā* when a slave, does not call for the prescribed punishment, for the helplessness and weakness of the slave can hinder him from safeguarding his honour and chastity. The Qur'ān itself has considered the state of slavery as excluded from the state of *iḥṣān* (moral fortification). (IV : 25). But Da'ūd Dhāhirī does not concede this argument; he holds that the *qāzif* of the slave or slave-girl also deserves the prescribed punishment of *qazf*.

(e) He should possess a pure and blameless character, i.e., he himself should be free from *zinā* proper and everything resembling therewith. This means that he should neither have been held guilty of *zinā* in the past, nor should have had sexual intercourse in an illegal marriage, nor with a slave girl who was not clearly in his possession legally, nor with a woman whom he mistook for his wife. His day to day life should be such that nobody could accuse him of immorality, nor he should have been held guilty of lesser crimes than *zinā* before. In all such cases the moral purity of the person falls into disrepute, and the accuser of such a person cannot deserve the prescribed punishment of 80 stripes. So

much so that if the guilt of *zinā* against an accused person is proved on the basis of evidence just before the enforcement of the prescribed punishment on an accuser, the latter will be forgiven, because the former is no longer chaste and morally pure.

Though the prescribed punishment cannot be enforced in any of these five cases, it does not, however, mean that a person who accuses an insane person or a minor or a non-Muslim, or a slave, or an unchaste person of *zinā* without proof, does not even deserve a discretionary punishment.

Now let us consider the conditions which must be found in the act of *qazf* itself. An accusation will be considered as *qazf*, if either an accuser accuses a person of such a sexual act which, if proved to be correct by necessary evidence, would make the accused liable to the prescribed punishment, or the accuser holds the accused as of illegitimate birth. But in either case the accusation must be unambiguous and in clear terms; vague references in which the accusation of *zinā* or illegitimacy depends upon the accuser's intention, are not reliable. For instance, using words like adulterer, sinner, wicked, immoral, etc. for a man, and prostitute, harlot, whore, etc. for a woman is only a reference and not *qazf*. Similarly, words which are used as an abuse like bastard, etc. cannot be regarded as *qazf*. There is, however, a difference of opinion among the jurists whether an allusion is also *qazf* or not. According to Imām Mālik, if the allusion is clear and is meant to charge the addressee of *zinā* or hold him as of illegitimate birth, it will be *qazf*, and the *qāzif* will be liable to the prescribed punishment. But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his companions and Imām Shāfi'ī, Sufyān Thaurī, Ibn Shubrumah, and Ḥasan bin Ṣāleh hold the view that an allusion is in any way ambiguous and doubtful, and wherever there is doubt, prescribed punishment cannot be awarded. Imām Aḥmad and Ishāq bin Rāhaviyah maintain that if an allusion is made in the heat of a quarrel or fight, it is *qazf*, but if in sport and fun, it is not. Ḥadrat 'Umar and Ḥadrat 'Alī, from among the Caliphs, awarded the prescribed punishment in cases of allusion. In the time of Ḥadrat 'Umar, one of the two men, who were involved in a brawl, said to the other, "Neither was my father an adulterer nor was my mother an adulteress." The case was brought before Ḥadrat 'Umar. He asked those present there what they understood by the remark. Some said that the man had only praised his parents and had not imputed anything to the other man's parents. Others objected to the use of the words and said that by these he had clearly alluded that the other man's parents were adulterous. Ḥadrat 'Umar concurred with the latter and awarded the prescribed punishment. (*Al-Jaṣṣāṣ*, vol. III, p. 330). There is also a difference of opinion as to whether accusing somebody of sodomy is *qazf* or not. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah does not regard it *qazf*; but Imām Abū Yūsuf, Imām Muḥammad, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī hold it as *qazf* and recommend the prescribed punishment for it.

(5) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether *qazf* is a cognizable offence or not. Ibn Abī Lailā says that this is the right of Allah; therefore, the *qāzif* will be awarded the prescribed punishment whether *maqzūf* (the accused) demands it or not. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his companions hold that it is certainly a right of Allah in so far as the enforcement of the prescribed punishment on the establishment of the offence is concerned, but in so far as the trial of the accuser under the law is concerned, it depends on the demand of the accused, and in this respect it is the right of man. The same is the opinion of Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Auzā'ī. According to Imām Mālik, if the offence of *qazf* is committed in the presence of the ruler, it is a cognizable offence, otherwise legal action against the accuser will depend on the demand of the accused.

(6) *Qazf* is not a compoundable offence. If the accused does not bring the case to the court, it will be a different thing; but when the case is brought to the court, the accuser will be pressed to prove his accusation, and if he fails to prove it, he will be awarded the prescribed punishment. The court then cannot pardon him nor the accused himself, nor the matter can be settled by making monetary compensation, nor the accuser can escape punishment by offering repentance or apology. The Holy Prophet has instructed: "Forgive among yourselves offences that deserve the prescribed punishment, but when a case is brought before me, the punishment will become obligatory."

(7) According to the Ḥanafīs, the demand for the prescribed punishment of *qazf* can either be made by the accused, or, if the accused is not there, by the one whose lineage suffers the stigma, e.g., the father, mother, children and the children's children. But according to Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī, this right is inherited. If the accused dies, each one of his legal heirs can make the demand for the prescribed punishment. It is, however, strange that Imām Shāfi'ī excludes the husband and the wife from this right on the ground that their marriage bond breaks with death, and the accusation against one spouse does not affect the lineage of the other. The fact is that both these arguments are weak. When it is conceded that the right to demand the prescribed punishment for *qazf* is inheritable, it will be against the Qur'ān to exclude the husband and the wife from the exercise of this right on the ground that their marriage bond breaks with death, because the Qur'ān itself has declared each of them as an heir on the death of the other. As for the argument that the accusation against one does not affect the lineage of the other, it may be correct in the case of the husband but it is absolutely wrong in the case of the wife; the man whose wife is accused of *zinā* has the lineage of his children automatically rendered doubtful. Moreover, it is not correct to think that the punishment for *qazf* has been prescribed only to protect the lineage of the people; honour along with lineage is equally important. Thus, it is no less damaging for a gentleman or a lady that his wife or her

husband is accused of *zinā*. Therefore, if the right to demand the prescribed punishment for *qazf* be inheritable there is no reason why the husband and the wife should be debarred from exercising that right.

(8) After it has been established that a person has committed *qazf*, the only thing that can save him from the prescribed punishment is that he should produce four witnesses who should give evidence in the court that they have seen the accused committing *zinā* practically with such and such a man or woman. According to the Ḥanafīs, all the four witnesses should appear at one and the same time in the court and they should give evidence all together. For if they appear one after the other, each one of them will become a *qāzif*, and will need four witnesses to support him. But this is a weak argument. The correct position is the one adopted by Imām Shāfi'ī and 'Uthmān al-Battī, that it is immaterial whether the witnesses appear all together or come one after the other ; it is rather better that as in other cases the witnesses should come one after the other and give evidence. The Ḥanafīs hold that it is not necessary that the witnesses should be righteous ; even if the *qāzif* produces four immoral persons as witnesses, he will escape the prescribed punishment of *qazf*, and the accused also the prescribed punishment of *zinā*, because the witnesses are not righteous. However, if the *qāzif* produces witnesses who are unbelieving, or blind, or slave, or those already convicted of *qazf*, he will not escape the punishment. Imām Shāfi'ī holds that if the *qāzif* produces witnesses who are immoral, he and his witnesses, all will become liable to the prescribed punishment, and the same is the opinion of Imam Mālik. But the view of the Ḥanafīs in this matter appears to be nearer the truth. According to them, if the witnesses are righteous, the *qāzif* will be acquitted of the charge of *qazf*, and the crime of *zinā* will become established against the accused. But if the witnesses are not righteous, the *qāzif*'s crime of *qāzif*, the *maqzūf*'s crime of *zinā* and the evidence of the witnesses will all stand doubtful, and none will be held liable to punishment on account of the element of doubt.

(9) The Qur'ān has given three Commandments in respect of the person who fails to produce proper evidence which can cause his acquittal of the crime of *qazf* :

- (a) He should be awarded 80 stripes,
- (b) His evidence should not be accepted in future,
- (c) He himself is a transgressor.

After this the Qur'ān says :

"...except those who repent of it and mend their ways; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

The question arises : To which of these three Commands is the forgiveness due to repentance and reformation as mentioned in the verse related ? The jurists are agreed that it is not related to the first Command. That is, repentance will not render the punishment null and void, and the criminal will be given flogging in any case. The jurists are also agreed

that the forgiveness is related to the third Command, which means that after repentance and reformation the criminal will no longer be a sinner and Allah will forgive him. (Here the difference of opinion is only in this matter whether the criminal becomes a sinner due to the crime of *qazf* itself, or after his conviction by the court. Imām Shāfi'ī and Laith bin Sa'd hold that he becomes a sinner due to the crime of *qazf* itself, and therefore, they reject his evidence thenceforth. On the contrary, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, his companions and Imām Mālik maintain that he becomes a sinner after the enforcement of the sentence ; therefore, till the enforcement of the sentence his evidence will be acceptable. But the truth is that in the sight of Allah the criminal becomes a sinner as a result of the crime of *qazf* itself, but for the people his being a sinner depends on his conviction by the court and the enforcement of the punishment on him). Now as far as the second Command, viz. "The evidence of *qāzif* should not be accepted in future", is concerned, there has been a great difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether the sentence "... except those who repent..." is related to this or not. One group says that this sentence is related only to the last Command. That is, a person who repents and mends his ways, will no longer be a sinner in the sight of Allah and the common Muslims, but the first two Commands will remain effective, i.e. the sentence will be enforced on him and his evidence will never be accepted in future. To this group belong eminent jurists like Qāzī Shuraiḥ, Sa'id bin Musayyab, Sa'id bin Jubair, Ḥasan Baṣrī, Ibrahīm Nakhā'ī, Ibn Sirīn, Makḥūl, 'Abdur Raḥmān bin Zaid, Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, Zufar, Muḥammad, Sufyān Thaurī, and Ḥasan bin Ṣāleḥ. The other group says that the clause "... except those who repent ..." is not related to the first Command but is related to the other two. That is, after repentance, not only will the evidence of the offender who has been punished for *qazf* be acceptable, but he will also not be regarded as a sinner. This group comprises jurists of the status of 'Atā', Ta'ūs, Mujāhid, Sha'bī, Qāsim bin Muḥammad, Sālim, Zuhri, 'Ikrimah, 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Azīz, Ibn Abī Nujaiḥ, Sulemān bin Yasār, Masrūq, Zaḥḥāk, Mālik bin Anas, 'Uthmān al-Battī, Laith bin Sa'd, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī. Among other arguments, these scholars cite the verdict of Ḥadrat 'Umar which he gave in the case of Mughīrah bin Shu'bah. For, according to some traditions, after enforcing the punishment, Ḥadrat 'Umar said to Abū Bakrah and his two companions : "If you repent (or confess your lie), I shall accept your evidence in future, otherwise not." His companions confessed but not Abū Bakrah. On the face of it, it appears to be a strong argument. But from the details given above of Mughīrah bin Shu'bah's case, it would become obvious that it is not correct to cite this precedent in support of this view. For in that case, there was complete unanimity as far as the act (of sexual intercourse) was concerned and Mughīrah bin Shu'bah himself did not deny it. The point of

dispute was the identity of the woman. Mughīrah said that she was his own wife, whom the accusers had mistaken for Umm Jamīl. Then it had also been established that the wife of Ḥadrat Mughīrah and Umm Jamīl resembled with each other to a degree that from the distance and in the kind of light that they were seen, the former could be mistaken for the latter. But the circumstantial evidence was wholly in favour of Mughīrah bin Shu'bah, and a witness of the case also had admitted that the woman was not clearly visible. That is why Ḥadrat 'Umar decided the case in favour of Mughīrah bin Shu'bah, and after punishing Abū Bakrah, said the words as mentioned in the above-quoted traditions. This clearly shows that the real intention of Ḥadrat 'Umar was to impress on the accusers that they should confess that they had given way to undue suspicion and that they should repent of accusing people on the basis of such suspicions in future, otherwise their evidence would never be accepted. From this it cannot be concluded that in the eyes of Ḥadrat 'Umar the evidence of a person whose falsehood had been established, could become acceptable just after he had repented. The truth is that in this matter the view of the former group is more sound. None except Allah can know whether a person has repented sincerely or not. If a person repents before us, we may not consider him as a transgressor afterwards, but once his falsehood has been established, we cannot afford to trust him in future simply because he has uttered repentance. Moreover, the words in the Text themselves indicate that "... except those who repent ..." is related only to "... they themselves are transgressors". The reason is that the first two things, in the sentence—"flog them with eighty stripes, and never accept their evidence afterwards"—have been given in the imperative form, while the third thing—"they themselves are transgressors"—is a predicate. Then the clause "... except those who repent ..." just after the predicate itself indicates that the exception relates to the predicate and not to the two imperative sentences. Nevertheless, if it is conceded that the exception is not confined to the last sentence, one does not understand why it should be made to apply to "never accept their evidence" only and not extended to "flog them with eighty stripes" also.

(10) A question may be asked : Why should not the exception in "...except those who repent..." be made applicable to the first Command also? *Qazf* after all is a sort of defamation. Why should not a person who confesses his guilt, apologizes and repents, be let off, when Allah Himself says : "...except those who repent and mend their ways; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." It will be strange that Allah forgives while the people do not forgive. The answer is that the act of *Taubah* (repentance) is not merely uttering the word *Taubah* with the tongue; it rather implies having a feeling of regrets, a resolve to reform and an inclination to do right; and this can only be known to Allah whether a person has repented sincerely or not. That is why on repentance worldly punishments

اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝ وَيَدْرُوْا عَنهَا الْعَذَابَ اَنْ تَشْهَدَ اَرْبَعَ شَهَدٰتٍ
 بِاللّٰهِ ۝ اِنَّهُ لَيِّنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝ وَالْخَامِسَةَ اَنْ غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا اِنْ كَانَ
 مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ وَكُوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ
 حَكِيْمٌ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْا بِالْاِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۗ لَا تَحْسَبُوْهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ
 بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِيُخْلِئَ اَمْرِيْ مِنْهُمْ مَّا اَكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْاِثْمِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْ تَوَلَّى
 كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۝ كُوْلَا اِذَا سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ فَخَنِّ الْمُوْمِنُوْنَ وَ
 الْمُوْمِنٰتِ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ خَيْرًا ۗ وَّ قَالُوْا هٰذَا اِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝ كُوْلَا جَآءُوْا عَلَيْهِ
 بِاَرْبَعَةٍ شُهَدَآءٍ ۗ فَاِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ۝
 وَكُوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَسَّكُمْ فِيْ مَا
 اَفَضْتُمْ فِيْهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۝ اِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِالسِّنِّتِكُمْ وَتَقُوْلُوْنَ يَا فَوَٰهِيْكُمْ
 مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُوْنَهُ هَيِّنًا ۗ وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمٌ ۝ وَكُوْلَا
 اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُوْنُ لَنَا اَنْ نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهٰذَا سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ
 عَظِيْمٌ ۝ يَعِظُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تَعُوْدُوْا لِمِثْلِهٖ اَبَدًا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝ وَاٰتِيْنَ
 اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ الْاٰتِيْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ حَكِيْمٌ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ تَشِيْعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ
 فِي الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا اَمُّهُمَّ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۗ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ
 لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَكُوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ رَوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝
 يَاۤيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاِنَّهٗ
 يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَكُوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكٰى مِنْكُمْ
 مِّنْ اَحَدٍ اَبَدًا ۗ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝ وَلَا

(As for the woman), it shall avert the punishment from her if she swears four times by Allah that the man is false (in his charge) and the fifth time she invokes Allah's wrath upon herself, if he be true (in his charge).⁷ If Allah had not shown you His grace and mercy and if Allah had not been most Forgiving and All-Wise, (you would have been in a great fix because of accusing your wives). **8-10**

Those who have invented the slander,⁸ are some of your own people.⁹ You should not, however, regard this matter as evil for it has good in it for you.¹⁰ Whoso took any part in this, he earned his share of the sin accordingly, and the one, who had the greatest share of responsibility in it,¹¹ shall have a terrible punishment. When you heard of it, why didn't the Believing men and the Believing women have a good opinion of themselves,¹² and why did they not say, "This is a manifest slander?"¹³ Why did the slanderers not bring four witnesses (to prove their charge)? Now that they have not brought witnesses, they themselves are liars in the sight of Allah.¹⁴ Were it not for Allah's grace and mercy towards you in this world and in the Hereafter, a painful scourge would have visited you because of the things in which you were involved. (Just think how erroneous you were,) when you passed this lie on from one tongue to the other and uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge. You took it as a trifling matter whereas it was a grave offence in the sight of Allah. **11-15**

Why did you not, as soon as you heard of it, say, "It is not proper for us to utter such a thing? Glory be to Allah! This is a great slander." Allah admonishes you that in future you should never repeat a thing like this, if you are true Believers. Allah makes His Revelations clear to you, and He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.¹⁵ **16-18**

As for those, who like that indecency should spread among the Believers, they deserve a painful punishment in this world and in the Hereafter,¹⁶ for Allah knows and you do not know (its consequences).¹⁷ If Allah had not shown His grace and mercy to you, (this scandal would have produced very evil results): Allah is indeed very Kind and Merciful. **19-20**

O Believers, do not follow in Satan's footsteps, for he **21**

will incite to indecency and wickedness any who will follow him. If Allah had not shown His grace and mercy to you, none of you would have been able to cleanse yourself,¹⁸ for it is Allah alone Who cleanses whom He wills, and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.¹⁹

are not forgiven but only punishments of the Hereafter; and that is why, Allah does not say that if the offenders repent, they may be forgiven, but says : "For those who repent, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" If the worldly punishments are also excused on repentance, there will be no offender who will not offer repentance in order to escape his sentence.

(11) Another side of the question is that if a person cannot produce witnesses in support of his accusation, it may not necessarily mean that he is a liar. Is it not possible that he be true in his accusation, yet he may fail to produce evidence? Then, how is it that he should be condemned as a sinner on account of his failure to produce witnesses not only by the people but also by Allah? The answer is that even if a person is an eye-witness to the immorality committed by an other person, he will be considered as a sinner for publicising the act and accusing the offender without necessary evidence. The Divine Law does not want that if a person gets polluted in filth in a private place, the other person should start spreading the filth in the whole society. If he has any knowledge of the presence of the filth, there are two ways open for him : either he should let it remain where it is, or he should produce a proof of its existence, so that the officials of the Islamic State should cleanse it. There is no third way for him. If he publicises it, he will be committing the crime of spreading the filth everywhere; and if he brings the matter to the notice of the officials without satisfactory evidence, they will not be able to deal with it effectively. The result will be that the failure of the case will become a means of spreading the filth and encouraging the wicked element of society. Therefore, the one who commits *qazf* without necessary proof and evidence, will in any case be a sinner even if he be true in his accusation.

(12) The Hanafī jurists hold that the *qāzif* should be given a lighter punishment than the one who is convicted of *zina*. That is, he, should be given eighty stripes but flogging should be less intense, the reason being that his being a liar is not certain in the offence for which he is being punished.

(13) Majority of the jurists including the Hanafīs are of the view that only one punishment will be enforced on the *qāzif* no matter how often he repeats the accusation before or during the enforcement of the punishment. If after the punishment the *qāzif* goes on repeating the same accusation, the punishment which he has already been awarded, will suffice. However, if after the enforcement of the prescribed punishment,

he brings another charge of *zinā* against the accused, he will be tried again for the new charge of *qazf*. Abū Bakrah after getting the punishment in the case against Mughīrah bin Shū'bah, went on repeating openly that he bore witness that Mughīrah had committed *zinā*. Ḥadrat 'Umar wanted to try him again, but as he was repeating the same accusation, Ḥadrat 'Ali expressed the opinion that he could not be tried again and Ḥadrat 'Umar conceded it. After this the jurists became almost unanimous that a *qāzif* who has received the prescribed punishment for a crime, cannot be tried again unless he commits a fresh crime of *qazf*.

(14) There is a difference among the jurists with regard to *qazf* against a group. According to the Ḥanafīs, if a person accuses a number of persons in one word or in more words separately, he will be awarded only one prescribed punishment unless, of course, he commits a fresh crime of *qazf* after the enforcement of the first punishment. The words of the verse — "Those who accuse chaste woman..." — indicate that the accuser of one person or more persons deserves only one punishment. Moreover, there can be no *zinā* for which at least two persons cannot be accused, but in spite of that the Law-giver has prescribed only one punishment and not two, one for accusing the woman and the other for accusing the man. Contrary to this, Imām Shāfi'ī holds that the person who accuses a group of persons, whether in one word or in more words separately, will be awarded as many punishments as the number of the persons accused, one for each. The same is the opinion of 'Uthmān al-Battī. However, the ruling of Ibn Abī Lailā, to which Sha'bī and Auzā'ī also subscribe, is that the one who accuses a group of persons of *zinā* in one word, deserves one punishment, and the one who accuses them separately in separate words, deserves separate punishments, one for each.

7. These verses were sent down some time after the preceding verses. The Law of *Qazf* prescribed the punishment for the person who accused the other man or woman of *zinā*, and did not produce witnesses to prove his charge, but the question naturally arose, what should a man do if he finds his own wife involved in *zinā*? If he kills her, he will be guilty of murder and punishable; if he goes to get witnesses, the offender might escape; if he tries to ignore the matter, he cannot do so for long. He can, of course, divorce the woman, but in this case there will be no moral or physical punishment either for the woman or her seducer; and if the illicit intercourse results in pregnancy, he will have to suffer the burden of bringing up another person's child. Initially this question was raised by Ḥadrat Sa'd bin 'Ubādah as an hypothetical case, who said that if he happened to see such a thing in his own house, he would not go in search of witnesses, but would settle the matter there and then with the sword. (Bukhārī, Muslim). But soon afterwards actual cases were brought before the Holy Prophet by the husbands who were eye-witnesses of this thing. According to traditions related by 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Umar, an Anṣār Muslim (probably 'Uwaimir

'Ajlānī) came to the Holy Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah, if a person finds another man with his wife, and utters an accusation, you will enforce the prescribed punishment of *qazf* on him; if he commits murder, you will have him killed; if he keeps quiet, he will remain involved in anguish; then, what should he do?" At this the Holy Prophet prayed, "O Allah, give a solution of this problem." (Muslim, Bukhārī, Abū Da'ūd, Aḥmad, Nasā'i). Ibn 'Abbās has reported that Hilāl bin Umayyah presented the case of his wife whom he had himself witnessed involved in the act of sin. The Holy Prophet said, "Bring your proof, otherwise you will have the prescribed punishment of *qazf* inflicted on you." At this a panic spread among the Companions, and Hilāl said, "I swear by Allah Who has sent you as a Prophet that I am speaking the truth: I have seen it with my eyes and heard it with my ears: I am sure Allah will send down a Command, which will protect my back (from the punishment). So, this verse was revealed." (Bukhārī, Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd). The legal procedure which has been laid down in this verse, is termed as the Law of *Li'ān*.

The details of the cases which the Holy Prophet judged in accordance with the Law of *Li'ān* are found in the the books of *Ḥadīth* and these form the source and basis of this law.

According to the details of Hilāl bin Umayyah's case as reported in *Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta*, *Musnad Aḥmad* and *Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr*, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās and Anas bin Mālik, both Hilāl and his wife were presented before the Holy Prophet, who first of all apprised them of the Divine Law, and then said: "You should note it well that the punishment of the Hereafter is much severer than the punishment of this world." Hilāl submitted that his charge was absolutely correct. The woman denied it. The Holy Prophet then said: "Let us proceed according to the Law of *Li'ān*." So, Hilāl stood up first and swore oaths according to the Qurānic Command. The Holy Prophet went on reminding them again and again: "Allah knows that one of you is certainly a liar: then, will one of you repent?" Before Hilāl swore for the fifth time, the people who were present there, said to him, "Fear God: the punishment of the world is lighter than of the Hereafter. The fifth oath will make the punishment obligatory on you." But Hilāl said that that God Who had protected his back (from punishment) in this world, will also spare him in the Hereafter. After this he swore the fifth oath, too. Then the woman began to swear oaths. Before she swore the fifth oath, she was also stopped and counselled, "Fear God: the worldly punishment is easier to bear than the punishment of the Hereafter. This last oath will make the Divine punishment obligatory on you." Hearing this the woman hesitated a little. The people thought that she was going to make the confession. But instead of that she said: "I do not want to put my clan to disgrace for ever," and swore for the fifth time, too. At this the Holy

Prophet ordered separation between them and ruled that her child after birth would be attributed to her and not to the man; that nobody after that would blame her or her child; that anybody who accused either of them would incur the punishment of *qazf*; and that she had no right left to claim maintenance, etc. from Hilāl, during her legal waiting period, because she was being separated neither on account of divorce nor due to the husband's death. Then the Holy Prophet asked the people to see whether the child on birth took after Hilāl or the man who was being accused in connection with the woman. After delivery when it was seen that the child took after the other man, the Holy Prophet said: "If there had been no swearing of the oaths (or if Allah's Book had not settled the matter before this), I would have dealt with this woman most severely."

The details of the case of 'Uwaimir 'Ajlānī have been cited in Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah and Musnad Aḥmad, on the authority of Sahl bin Sa'd Sā'idī and Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both). According to these, 'Uwaimir and his wife were both summoned to the Prophet's Mosque. Before proceeding against them in accordance with the Law of *Li'ān*, the Holy Prophet warned them thrice, saying: "Allah knows full well that one of you is a liar: then, will one of you repent?" When neither repented, they were told to exercise *Li'ān*. After that 'Uwaimir said, "O Messenger of Allah, now if I keep this woman, I would be a liar," and then he divorced her thrice there and then even without the Holy Prophet's permission to do so. According to Sahl bin Sa'd, the Holy Prophet enforced the divorce to separate them, and said, "There shall be separation between the husband and the wife if they exercise *Li'ān*." This became established as a *Sunnah* that the couple who swore against each other would separate never to marry again. Ibn 'Umar only says this that the Holy Prophet enforced separation between them. Sahl bin Sa'd, however, adds that the woman was pregnant and 'Uwaimir said that it was not due to his seed; so the child was attributed to the mother. The practice that thus became established was that such a child would inherit the mother and the mother him.

Apart from these two cases, we find several other traditions also in the books of *Hadīth*, which may or may not be related to these cases, but some of these traditions mention other cases as well, which provide important components of the Law of *Li'ān*.

Ibn 'Umar has reported traditions according to which the Holy Prophet ordered separation between the spouses after *Li'ān* and ruled that in case of pregnancy the child would be attributed to the mother (Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta, Aḥmad). According to another tradition of Ibn 'Umar, the Holy Prophet said to a man and woman after *Li'ān*: "Now your affair is with Allah: in any case one of you is a liar." Then he said to the man, "Now she is not yours: you have no right on her, nor can you treat her

vindictively in any way." The man requested, "Sir, please have my dowry returned to me." The Holy Prophet said, "You have no right to have the dowry back. If you are true in your accusation, the dowry is the price of the pleasure you had from her when she was lawful to you; and if your accusation is false, the dowry has receded farther away from you than it is from her." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd).

Daraqutnī has quoted 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib and Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with them both) as saying: "The *Sunnah* that has become established is that the spouses who have exercised *Li'ān* against each other, can never re-unite in marriage." Again Daraqutnī has quoted Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās as saying, "The Holy Prophet himself has ruled that the two can never re-unite in wedlock."

Qabiṣah bin Zu'aib has reported that a man in the time of Ḥadrat 'Umar alleged that his wife was pregnant by illicit intercourse, then admitted that it was by his own seed, but after delivery again denied that the child was his. The case was brought to the court of Ḥadrat 'Umar, who enforced the prescribed punishment of *qasf* on the man and ruled that the child would be attributed to him. (Daraqutnī, Baihaqī).

Ibn 'Abbās has reported that a man came to the Holy Prophet and said, "Sir, I have a wife for whom I have great love; but her weakness is that she does not mind if the other man touches her. (By this he might have meant *zinā* or a lesser moral evil)." The Holy Prophet replied, "You may divorce her." The man said, "But I cannot live without her." Thereupon the Holy Prophet said, "Then you should pull on with her." (The Holy Prophet did not ask the man for any explanation, nor took his complaint as an accusation of *zinā*, nor applied the law of *li'ān*). (Nasā'ī)

Abū Hurairah has narrated the case of a beduin who came to the Holy Prophet and said that his wife had given birth to a dark-coloured son and he was doubtful that it was his. (That is, the child's colour had caused him the suspicion, otherwise there was no ground with him to accuse her of *zinā*). The Holy Prophet asked him, "Do you have any camels?" The man replied in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet then asked, "What is their colour?" He said they were red. The Holy Prophet said, "Is any of them grey also?" He said, "Yes, Sir, some are grey also." The Holy Prophet asked, "What caused that colour?" He said, "Might be due to some ancestor of theirs." The Holy Prophet replied, "The same might be the cause for your child's colour." And he did not allow him to doubt and deny the child's fatherhood. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Ahmad, Abū Da'ūd).

According to another tradition of Abū Hurairah, explaining the verse of *li'ān* the Holy Prophet said: "The woman who brings a child into a family which does not actually belong to it (i.e. marries a man of the family with illicit pregnancy), has no relation with Allah. Allah will never admit her into Paradise. Similarly, the man who denies the father-

hood of his child, whereas the child looks up towards him, will never see Allah on the Day of Judgment, and Allah will put him to disgrace in front of all mankind." (Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'i, Dārimī).

Thus, the verse of *li'ān*, the traditions of the Holy Prophet, the precedents and the general principles of the *Shari'ah* together form the basis of the Law of *Li'ān*, which the jurists have formulated as a complete code with the following main clauses:

(1) There is a difference of opinion about the man who sees his wife involved in *zinā* with another man and kills him instead of having recourse to *li'ān*. One group holds that he will be put to death because he had no right to take the law in his own hand and enforce the punishment. The other group says that he will not be put to death nor will he be held accountable for his act in any way provided that it is confirmed that he killed the man (adulterer) on account of *zinā* and nothing else. Imām Aḥmad and Ishāq bin Rāhaviyah maintain that the man will have to produce two witnesses to confirm that he killed the adulterer only on account of *zinā*. Ibn al-Qāsim and Ibn Ḥabīb, from among the Mālikīs, attach an additional condition that the murdered person should be a married man; otherwise the murderer will be made subject to the law of retaliation for killing an unmarried adulterer. But the majority of jurists are of the opinion that the man will be exonerated from retaliation only when he produces four witnesses to establish *zinā*, or if the murdered person himself confesses before death that he committed *zinā* with the wife of the murderer, and if it is also confirmed that the murdered person was a married man. (*Nail al-Aṭṭār*, vol. IV, p. 228).

(2) The Law of *Li'ān* cannot be applied mutually at home, but in a court of law in front of the judge.

(3) Exercise of *li'ān* is not the sole right of the man; the woman also has a right to demand it in a court of law if her husband accuses her of *zinā*, or denies fatherhood of her child.

(4) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether *li'ān* can be resorted to between any husband and his wife, or whether they have to satisfy certain conditions. Imām Shāfi'ī holds that only that husband whose oath is legally reliable and who can exercise the right of 'divorce, can swear the oaths of *li'ān*. In other words, sanity and maturity according to him, are the sufficient conditions which entitle a husband to exercise *li'ān* no matter whether the spouses are Muslim or non-Muslim, slave or free, and whether their evidence is acceptable or not, and whether the Muslim husband has a Muslim or a *zimmī* wife. Imām Mālik and Imām Aḥmad have also given almost the same opinion. But the Ḥanafīs maintain that *li'ān* can be exercised only by free Muslim spouses, who should not have been convicted of *qazf* previously. If both husband and wife are non-Muslim, or slaves, or convicted of *qazf* previously, they cannot exercise *li'ān* against each other. Furthermore, if the woman was ever found guilty of an illicit or doubtful relationship

with another man, exercise of *li'ān* will not be valid. The Ḥanafīs have imposed these conditions, because according to them, there is no other difference between *li'ān* and *qazf* than this:—If the other man commits *qazf*, he is given the prescribed punishment, but if the husband himself commits it, he can escape the punishment by exercising *li'ān*. In all other respects, *li'ān* and *qazf* are identical. Moreover, since according to the Ḥanafīs, the oaths of *li'ān* are in the nature of evidence, they do not concede this right to a person who is not legally fit to give evidence. But the truth is that in this matter the position of the Ḥanafīs is weak, and the opinion of Imām Shāfi'ī is correct, because the Qur'ān has not made the accusation of the wife a component part of the verse of *qazf*, but has prescribed a separate law for it. Therefore, it cannot be linked with the law of *qazf* and treated under the conditions prescribed for *qazf*. Then, the wording of the verse of *li'ān* is different from the wording of the verse of *qazf* and the two lay down separate injunctions. Therefore, the law of *li'ān* should be derived from the verse of *li'ān* and not from the verse of *qazf*. For instance, according to the verse of *qazf*, the person who accuses chaste women (*muḥṣanāt*) of *zinā*, deserves to be punished. But in the verse of *li'ān*, there is no condition of the chastity of the wife. A woman might have committed sins in life, but if she repents later on and marries somebody, the husband is not authorised by the verse of *li'ān* to accuse her unjustly whenever he likes, and to deny fatherhood of her children simply because she had once lived in sin. The other equally important reason is that there is a world of difference between accusing a wife and accusing the other woman. The law cannot treat the two alike. A man has nothing to do with the other woman. He is neither attached to her emotionally, nor his honour, his family relations and rights are at stake nor his lineage. The only meaningful interest he can have in the woman's character can be his desire to see a morally pure and clean society. Contrary to this, his relationship with his wife is deep and of varied nature. She is the custodian of the purity of his race, of his property and his house; she is his life partner, sharer of his secrets, and with her he is attached in most delicate and deep feelings. If she is morally corrupt, it will deal a serious blow to his honour, his interests and his progeny. These two things, therefore, cannot be considered alike, and the law cannot treat them as equal to each other. Is an evil affair of the wife of a *zimmi*, or a slave, or a convicted husband in any way different, or less serious, in consequences than that of the wife of a free, mature and sound Muslim? If the husband himself sees his wife involved in *zinā* with another person, or has reasons to believe that his wife is pregnant by illicit intercourse, how can he be denied the right of *li'ān*? And if he is denied this right, what else is there in our law which can help him out of his awkward situation? The intention of the Qur'ān seems to be to open a way out of a difficult situation for married couples in which a husband may find himself placed due to the wife's immorality or illicit pregnancy, or a wife due to the

husband's false accusation or unjustified denial of the fatherhood of her child. This is not particularly the need of the free and sound Muslims alone; there is in fact nothing in the Qur'ānic Text which may confine it to them only. As for the argument that the Qur'ān has described the oaths of *li'ān* as evidence (*shahādat*), and therefore the conditions of evidence will apply here, the logical implication would be that in case a righteous and just husband whose evidence is acceptable, takes the necessary oaths, and the wife declines to take the oaths, she would have to be stoned to death, because her immorality would thus become established. But it is strange that in this case the Ḥanafīs do not recommend stoning. This is a clear proof of the fact that they too do not regard the oaths as exactly identical with evidence. The truth is that though the Qur'ān describes the oaths of *li'ān* as evidence, it does not regard them as evidence in the technical sense, otherwise it would have required the woman to swear eight oaths and not four.

(5) *Li'ān* is not necessitated by an allusion or expression of doubt or suspicion, but only when the husband accuses his wife clearly of *zinā*, or denies in plain words that the child is his. Imām Mālik and Laith bin Sa'd impose an additional condition that the husband while exercising *li'ān* must say that he has himself seen his wife involved in *zinā*. But this is an unnecessary restriction which has no basis whatever in the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*.

(6) If after accusing his wife, the husband declines to swear the oaths, the verdict of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his companions is that he will be imprisoned and shall not be released until he exercises *li'ān* or confesses the falsehood of his accusation, in which case he will be awarded the prescribed punishment of *qazf*. On the contrary, Imām Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Ḥasan bin Şāleh and Laith bin Sa'd express the opinion that refusal to exercise *li'ān* itself amounts to confessing one's being a liar, which makes the prescribed punishment of *qazf* obligatory.

(7) If after the swearing of oaths by the husband, the wife declines to take the oaths, the Ḥanafīs give the opinion that she should be imprisoned and should not be released until she exercises *li'ān*, or else confesses her guilt of *zinā*. On the contrary, the other Imāms (as mentioned in clause 6 above) say that in this case she will be stoned to death. They base their argument on the Qur'ānic injunction: "... it shall avert the punishment from her if she swears four times by Allah..." Now that she declines to swear the oaths, she inevitably deserves the punishment. But the weakness in this argument is that the Qur'ān does not specify here the nature of "punishment"; it simply mentions punishment. If it is argued that punishment here means the punishment of *zinā* only, the answer is that for the punishment of *zinā* the Qur'ān has imposed the condition of four witnesses in clear words, and this condition cannot be fulfilled by four oaths sworn by one person. The husband's oaths can suffice for him to escape the punishment of *qazf* and for the wife to face the injunction of *li'ān*, but they are not enough

to prove the charge of *zinā* against her. The woman's refusal to swear the oaths in self-defence certainly creates a suspicion, and a strong suspicion indeed, but a prescribed punishment cannot be enforced on the basis of suspicions. This thing cannot be considered as analogous with the prescribed punishment of *qazf* for the man, because his *qazf* is established, and that is why he is made to exercise *li'ān*. But contrary to this, the woman's guilt of *zinā* is not established unless she herself makes a confession of it or four eye-witnesses are produced to prove it.

(8) If the woman is pregnant at the time of *li'ān*, according to Imām Aḥmad, *li'ān* itself suffices to absolve the husband from the responsibility for pregnancy whether he has denied accepting it or not. Imām Shāfi'ī, however, says that accusation of *zinā* by the husband and his refusal to accept responsibility for pregnancy are not one and the same thing. Therefore, unless the husband categorically refuses to accept the responsibility for pregnancy, he will be considered as responsible for it in spite of the accusation of *zinā* by him, because the woman's being adulterous does not necessarily mean that her pregnancy is also due to *zinā*.

(9) Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad concede the husband's right to deny responsibility for pregnancy during pregnancy, and allow him the right of *li'ān* on that basis. But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says that if the basis for the man's accusation is not *zinā*, but only this that he has found pregnancy in the woman when it could not possibly be due to him, exercise of *li'ān* should be deferred until after delivery because sometimes symptoms of pregnancy appear due to some disease and not actual pregnancy.

(10) If a husband denies fatherhood of a child, there is a consensus that *li'ān* becomes necessary. There is also a consensus that after he has accepted the child once (whether it is in clear words or by implication, e.g. by receiving congratulatory messages on its birth, or by treating it lovingly like one's own child and taking due interest in its bringing up), he loses his right to deny him later, and if he does so, he makes himself liable to the prescribed punishment of *qazf*. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to how long the father retains a right to deny fatherhood of the child. According to Imām Mālik, if the husband was present at home while the wife was pregnant, he can deny the responsibility from the time of pregnancy till the time of delivery; after that he will have no right. However, if he was away from home and delivery took place in his absence, he can deny the child's fatherhood as soon as it comes to his knowledge. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, if he denies within a day or two of the child's birth, he will be absolved from the responsibility of the child after exercising *li'ān*, but if he denies after a year or two, *li'ān* will be valid, but he will not be absolved from the responsibility of the child. According to Imām Abū Yūsuf, the father has the right to deny fatherhood within 40 days of the child's birth, or knowledge of its birth; after that he will have no right. But

this restriction of 40 days is meaningless. The correct view is that of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that fatherhood can be denied within a day or two of the child's birth or knowledge of its birth, unless one is hindered from doing so due to a sound and genuine reason.

(11) If a husband accuses a divorced wife of *zinā*, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this will be a case of *qazf* and not of *li'ān*. *Li'ān* can be resorted to between the spouses and cannot be extended to a divorced woman unless it is a retractable divorce and the accusation is made within the period of retraction. But Imām Mālik holds that this will be *qazf* only if it does not involve the question of accepting or denying the responsibility of pregnancy or fatherhood of the child. If it is not that, the man has the right to exercise *li'ān* even after pronouncing the final divorce, because in that case he would not be having recourse to *li'ān* for the purposes of bringing infamy on the woman but to absolve himself from the responsibility of the child who, he believes, is not his. The same almost is the opinion of Imām Shāfi'ī.

(12) There is a complete consensus of opinion in respect of certain legal implications of *li'ān*, but certain others have been disputed by the jurists. The agreed ones are the following:

Neither the woman nor the man is liable to punishment. If the man denies fatherhood of the child, it will be attributed to the mother alone; it will neither be attributed to the father nor will inherit him; the child will inherit the mother and the mother him. Thereafter nobody will have the right to call the woman adulterous nor the child illegitimate, whether the people might be wholly sure of her being adulterous under the circumstances at the time of *li'ān*. Any person who repeats the old charge against the woman or her child, will make himself liable to the punishment of *qazf*. The woman's dowry will remain intact, but she will not be entitled to claim maintenance, etc. from the man, and she will become forbidden to him for ever.

There is, however, a difference of opinion in respect of two things :

(a) After *li'ān* how will separation be effected between the husband and the wife ?

(b) Is it possible for them to re-unite in marriage after they have been separated on account of *li'ān* ?

As regards the first question, Imām Shāfi'ī holds the opinion that as soon as a man has exercised his *li'ān*, the woman stands automatically separated whether she refutes the man's charge by her *li'ān* or not. Imām Mālik, Laith bin S'ad and Zufar maintain that separation is effected when both a man and a woman have exercised their *li'ān* one after the other. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad hold that separation does not take place automatically after *li'ān*, but it is effected by the judge. If the husband pronounces divorce, it takes effect, otherwise the judge will announce their separation.

Regarding the second question, the opinion of Imām Mālik, Abū Yūsuf, Zufar, Sufyān Thaurī, Ishāq bin Rāhaviyah, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and Ḥasan bin Zaid is that the spouses who have been separated due to *li'ān*, are forbidden to each other for ever. Even if they wish to remarry, they cannot do so in any case. The same is the opinion also of Ḥadrat 'Umar, Ḥadrat 'Alī and Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd. Contrary to this, Sa'īd bin Musayyab, Ibrahīm Nakha'ī, Sha'bī, Sa'īd bin Jubair, Abū Ḥanīfah and Muḥammad (may Allah be pleased with them all) opine that if the husband confesses his lie, and he is awarded the prescribed punishment for *qazf*, the two can re-unite in marriage. They argue that it is *li'ān* which makes them unlawful for each other. As long as they stand by their *li'ān*, they will remain forbidden for each other, but when the husband confesses his lie and receives the punishment, *li'ān* will become null and void and so will their prohibition to marry each other again.

8. This is an allusion to the slander against Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah. Allah has Himself described it as *Ifk* (false accusation, calumny) which implies its total refutation.

From here begins the mention of the incident which provided the occasion of this Sūrah's revelation. We have reproduced the initial part of it in the Introduction as related by Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah herself ; the rest of it is reproduced below. She says :

“Rumours about this slander went on spreading in the city for about a month, which caused great distress and anguish to the Holy Prophet. I cried due to helplessness and my parents were sick with mental agony. At last one day the Holy Prophet visited us and he sat near me, which he had not done since the slander had started. Feeling that something decisive was going to happen that day, Ḥadrat Abū Bakr and Umm Rūmān (Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah's mother) also sat near us. The Holy Prophet started the conversation, saying : ‘Ā'ishah, I have heard this and this about you : if you are innocent, I expect that Allah will declare your innocence. But if you have committed a sin, you should offer repentance and ask for Allah's forgiveness ; when a servant (of Allah) confesses his guilt and repents, Allah forgives him.’ Hearing these words, tears dried in my eyes. I looked up to my father expecting that he would reply to the Holy Prophet, but he said, ‘Daughter, I do not know what I should say.’ Then I turned to my mother, but she also did not know what to say. At last I said, ‘You have all heard something about me and believed it. Now if I say that I am innocent—and Allah is my witness that I am innocent—you will not believe me ; and if I confess something which I never did—and Allah knows that I never did it—you will believe me.’ At that time I tried to call to memory the name of Prophet Jacob but could not recall it. Therefore in view of the predicament that I was placed in, I said, ‘I cannot but repeat the words which the father of

Prophet Joseph had spoken : *fa-sabrun jamil* : I will bear this patiently with good grace.' (XII : 83). Saying this I lay down and turned to the other side. I was thinking that Allah was aware of my innocence, and He would certainly reveal the truth, but I could never imagine that Divine Revelation would come down in my defence, which the people will read and recite till the Last Day. What I thought probable was that the Holy Prophet would see a dream in which Allah would indicate my innocence. But in the meantime suddenly, the state of receiving Revelation appeared on the Holy Prophet, when pearl-like drops of perspiration used to gather on his face even in severe winter. We all held our breath and sat silent. As for me I was fearless, but my parents seemed to be struck with fear ; they did not know what the Divine Revelation would be. When the Revelation was over, the Holy Prophet seemed to be very pleased. Overjoyed with happiness the first words he spoke were: 'Congratulations, 'Ā'ishah, Allah has sent down proof of your innocence' and then he recited these ten verses (11—21). At this my mother said to me, 'Get up and thank the Holy Prophet.' I said, 'I shall neither thank him nor you two, but thank Allah Who has sent down my absolution. You did not even so much as contradict the charge against me.' (This is not the translation of any one tradition, but the substance of many traditions which are found in the books of *Ḥadīth* in connection with the incident of the slander against Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah).

One subtle point to be understood here is that before mentioning the absolution of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, a full section of verses has been devoted to the Commandments pertaining to *zinā*, *qazf* and *li'ān* by which Allah means to admonish that *zinā* is not a slight matter which may be used as a means of entertaining the people in a gathering. It is very serious. If the accuser is right in his accusation he should produce witnesses, and get a most horrible punishment inflicted upon the adulterer and the adulteress. If the accuser is false, he deserves to be given 80 stripes, so that nobody may dare to bring a false charge against the other person. And if the accuser is a husband, he will have to exercise *li'ān* in a court of law to settle the matter. So, none who utters such an accusation will have peace. The Islamic society which has been brought about for the purpose of establishing goodness and piety in the world, can neither tolerate *zinā* as a means of entertainment nor endure loose talk about it as a diversion and amusement.

9. Only a few persons have been mentioned in traditions, who were spreading the rumours. They were : 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, Zaid bin Rifā'ah (who was probably the son of Rifā'ah bin Zaid, the Jewish hypocrite), Miṣṭah bin Uṭhāthah, Ḥassān bin Thābit, and Ḥammah bint Jaḥsh. The first two of these were hypocrites, and the other three Muslims, who had been involved in the mischief due to misunderstanding and weakness. Names of the other people who were more or less involved

in the mischief have not been mentioned in the books of *Hadith* and life of the Holy Prophet.

10. That is, "You should not lose heart. Though the hypocrites, according to their own presumptions, have made the worst attack on you, it will eventually bring misfortune on them, and will prove to be a blessing in disguise for you."

As mentioned in the Introduction above, the hypocrites had planned to inflict a defeat on the Muslims on the moral front, which was their real field of superiority and responsible for their victory on every other front against the opponents. But Allah turned this mischief into a means of strength for the Muslims. On this occasion, the conduct and attitude adopted by the Holy Prophet, Hadrat Abū Bakr and his family, and the Muslims at large proved beyond any doubt that they were the purest people morally, tolerant and just in nature, noble and forbearing in character. If the Holy Prophet had wished he could have got the people responsible for the attack on his honour beheaded immediately. But he bore everything with patience for a whole month. And when Divine injunction came down from Allah, he enforced the punishment for *qazf* only on those three Muslims whose guilt was established, and even spared the hypocrites. Hadrat Abū Bakr's own relative, whose whole family he had been supporting all along, continued heaping disgrace on him publicly, but that noble man neither severed his family relations with him nor stopped monetary help to him and his family. None of the wives of the Holy Prophet took the least part in the slander nor even expressed the slightest approval of it. So much so that Hadrat Zainab (a wife of the Holy Prophet), for whose sake her real sister, Hamnah bint Jahsh, was taking part in the slander, did not utter anything about her rival (Hadrat 'Ā'ishah) except good words. According to Hadrat 'Ā'ishah, herself: "Zainab among the wives of the Holy Prophet was my strongest rival, but when in connection with the incident of the slander, the Holy Prophet asked her opinion of me, she said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I swear by God that I have perceived nothing in her except piety.'" Hadrat 'Ā'ishah's own nobility of character can be judged by this that though Hassān bin Thābit had played a prominent role in the campaign of slander against her, she continued to treat him with due honour and esteem. When the people reminded her that he was the man who had slandered her, she retorted, 'No, he it was who used to rebut the anti-Islamic poets on behalf of the Holy Prophet and Islam.' Such was the conduct and attitude of those people who were directly affected by the slander. As for the other Muslims, their attitude can be judged from one instance. When Hadrat Abū Ayyūb Anṣarī's wife mentioned before him the rumours of the slander, he said, "Mother of Ayyūb, if you had been there in place of 'Ā'ishah, would you have done that?" She replied, "By God, I would never have done it." Hadrat Ayyūb then said, "Well, 'Ā'ishah is a much better woman than you. As for myself, if I had been

in place of Şafwān, I could never have entertained such an evil thought and Şafwān is a better Muslim than I." Thus, the result of the mischief engineered by the hypocrites was contrary to what they had planned to achieve, and the Muslims emerged out of this test morally stronger than before.

Then there was more good to come from this. The incident became the cause of some very important additions to the social law and injunctions of Islam. Through these the Muslims received such Commandments from Allah by which the Muslim society can be kept clean and protected against the creation and propagation of moral evils, and if at all they arise, they can be corrected promptly.

Furthermore, there was another aspect of goodness in it also. The Muslims came to understand fully that the Holy Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) had no knowledge of the unseen. He knew only that which Allah taught him. Beside that his knowledge was the same as that of a common man. For one full month he remained in great anxiety with regard to Hadrat 'Ā'ishah. He would sometimes make enquiries from the maid-servant, sometimes from his other wives, and sometimes from Hadrat 'Alī and Hadrat Usāmah. At last when he spoke to Hadrat 'Ā'ishah, he spoke only this: "If you have committed the sin, you should offer repentance, and if you are innocent, I expect that Allah will declare your innocence." Had he possessed any knowledge of the unseen, he would not have felt so upset, nor would have made enquiries, nor counselled repentance. However, when Divine Message revealed the truth, he received that knowledge which he had not possessed for more than a month. Thus Allah arranged to safeguard the Muslims, through direct experience and observation, against exaggerated notions in which people generally get involved in regard to their religious leaders on account of excessive blind faith. Perhaps this was the reason why Allah withheld Revelation for a month, for if Revelation had been sent down on the very first day, it could not have had any beneficial effect.

11. That is, 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, who was the real author of the false accusation and mischief. In some traditions it has been wrongly claimed that this verse refers to Hadrat Hassān bin Thābit; this is actually due to a misunderstanding of the narrators themselves. As a matter of fact, Hadrat Hassān bin Thābit's only weakness was that he became involved in the mischief engineered by the hypocrites. Hāfiz ibn Kathīr has rightly observed that if this tradition had not been included in Bukhārī, it would not have deserved any notice. The greatest falsehood, rather a calumny, in this connection is the assertion by the Umayyads that it was Hadrat 'Alī who had been referred to in this verse. A saying of Hishām bin 'Abdul Malik has been cited in Bukhārī, Ṭabarānī and Baihaqī to the effect: "The one who had the greatest share of responsibility in it" refers to 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib. The fact, however, is that Hadrat 'Alī had no hand whatever in this mischief. The truth is that

when Ḥadrat 'Alī saw the Holy Prophet in a perturbed state of mind and the Holy Prophet asked for his counsel, he said : "Allah in this matter has not laid any restriction on you : suitable women are plenty : you may if you like divorce 'Ā'ishah and marry another woman." But this did not at all mean that Ḥadrat 'Alī had supported the accusation against Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah. His object was only to allay the Holy Prophet's mental anguish.

12. This may also be translated as : "Why did they not have a good opinion of the people of their own community and society?" The words in the Text are comprehensive and contain a subtle meaning which should be understood well. What happened concerning Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah and Ṣafwān bin Mu'attal was only this : A woman belonging to the caravan (apart from the fact that she was the Holy Prophet's wife) was left behind, and a man belonging to the same caravan, who was also left behind, chanced to see her and brought her on his camel to the camp. Now if a person alleges that when the two found themselves alone, they became involved in sin, the accusation would imply two other hypotheses: First, if the accuser himself (whether man or woman) had been there, he would certainly have availed of the rare opportunity and committed the sinful act, for he had never before chanced upon a person of the opposite sex in a situation like this. Second, the accuser's assessment of the moral condition of the society he belongs to is that in that society there is no man or woman who could possibly have abstained from sin in similar circumstances. This will be the case when it involves any one man and any one woman. But supposing if the man and the woman happened to belong to the same place, and the woman who was left behind by chance was the wife, or sister, or daughter of a friend, or a relative, or a neighbour, or an acquaintance of the man, the matter would become much more serious and grave. Then it would mean that the one who utters such an accusation has a very poor and degraded opinion of himself as well as of his society, which has nothing to do with morality and good sense. No gentleman can imagine that if he finds a woman belonging to the family of a friend, or a neighbour or an acquaintance, stranded on the way, the first thing he would do would be to molest and dishonour her, and then would think of escorting her home. But here the matter was a thousand times more serious. The lady was no other than the wife of the Holy Prophet of Allah, whom every Muslim esteemed higher than his own mother, and whom Allah Himself had forbidden for every Muslim just like his own mother. The man was not only a follower of the same caravan and a soldier of the same army, and an inhabitant of the same city, but also a Muslim, who believed in the lady's husband to be the Messenger of Allah and his religious leader and guide, and had even followed him and fought in the most dangerous battle at Badr. Viewed against this background, it would seem that the person who uttered such an accusation and those who considered the

accusation as probable, formed a very poor opinion not only of their moral selves but also of the whole society.

13. That is, "The accusation was not worth any consideration ; the Muslims should have rejected it there and then as a lie and a falsehood." A question might be asked: Why did not the Holy Prophet and Ḥadrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq reject it on the very first day, and why did they give it all that importance? The answer is that the position of the husband and the father is different from that of the common people. Though none else can know a woman better than her husband and a righteous husband cannot doubt the character of a virtuous and pious wife only on account of the people's accusations, but when the wife is accused, the husband is placed in a difficult situation. Even if he rejects it outright as a calumny, the accusers will not listen. They will rather say that the woman is clever and has beguiled the husband into believing that she is virtuous and pious whereas she is not. A similar situation is faced by the parents. They also cannot remove the accusers' slander regarding their daughter's chastity even if they know that the accusation is manifestly false. The same thing had afflicted the Holy Prophet, Ḥadrat Abū Bakr and Umm Rūmān, otherwise they did not entertain any doubt about Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah's character. That is why the Holy Prophet had declared in his sermon that he had neither seen any evil in his wife nor in the man who was being mentioned in the slander.

14. "... in the sight of Allah" : in the Law of Allah, or according to the Law of Allah. Obviously, in Allah's knowledge, the accusation was by itself false and its falsehood was in no way dependent on the production of witnesses by the accusers.

Here nobody should have the misunderstanding that failure to bring witnesses is being regarded as the basis and argument to prove that the accusation was false, and that the Muslims are also being told to regard it as a manifest calumny only because the accusers did not bring four witnesses. This misunderstanding can arise if one does not keep in view the background of the actual incident. As a matter of fact, none of the accusers had actually witnessed the thing which they were uttering with their tongues. The only basis of their accusation was that Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah had been left behind from the caravan and afterwards Ṣafwān had brought her to the camp on his camel. From this nobody with a little common sense could conclude that Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah's being left behind was intentional. These are not the ways of those who do these things. It cannot happen that the wife of the army commander quietly stays back with a man, and then the same man makes her ride on his camel and makes haste to catch up with the army at the next halting place in the open daylight at noon. The situation itself warranted that they were innocent. There could, however, be some justification in the charge if the accusers had seen something with their own eyes,

otherwise the circumstances on which the accusers had based their accusation did not contain any ground for doubt and suspicion.

15. These verses, especially verse 12, wherein Allah says : "Why did not the Believing men and the Believing women have a good opinion of themselves?" provide the general principle that all dealings in the Islamic society must be based on 'good faith'. The question of a bad opinion should arise only when there is a definite and concrete basis for it. Every person should, as a matter of principle, be considered as innocent unless there are sound reasons to hold him guilty or suspect. Every person should be considered as truthful unless there are strong grounds for holding him as unreliable.

16. The direct interpretation of the verse, in the context in which it occurs, is this : "Those who cast aspersions, propagate evil, publicise it and bring Islamic morality into disrepute, deserve punishment." The words in the Text, however, comprehend all the various forms that can be employed for the propagation of evil. These include actual setting up of brothels, production of erotic stories, songs, paintings, plays and dramas as well as all kinds of mixed gatherings at clubs and hotels, which induce the people to immoralities. The Qur'ān holds all those who resort to such things as criminals, who deserve punishment not only in the Hereafter but in this world as well. Accordingly it is the duty of an Islamic government to put an end to all such means of propagating immorality. Its penal law must hold all those acts as cognizable offences which the Qur'ān mentions as crimes against public morality and declares the offenders punishable.

17. "You do not know...": "You do not visualise the full impact of individual acts on society as a whole : Allah knows best the number of people who are affected by these acts and their cumulative effect on the collective life of the community. You should accordingly trust in Him and do all you can to eradicate and suppress the evils pointed out by Him. These are not trivial matters to be treated lightly ; these have very serious repercussions and the offenders must be dealt with severely."

18. 'Satan' is bent upon involving you in all kinds of pollutions and indecencies : had it not been for the mercy and kindness of Allah Who enables you to differentiate between good and evil and helps you to educate and reform yourselves, you would not have been able to lead a pure and virtuous life on the strength of your own faculties and initiative alone.

19. It is Allah's Will alone which decides whom to make pious and virtuous. His decisions are not arbitrary but based on knowledge. He alone knows who is anxious to live a life of virtue and who is attracted towards a life of sin. Allah hears a person's most secret talk, and is aware of everything that passes in his mind. It is on the basis of this direct knowledge that Allah decides whom to bless with piety and virtue and whom to ignore.

20. Hadrat 'Ā'ishah has stated that after the revelation of verses 11—21 absolving her from the accusation, Hadrat Abū Bakr swore that he would no longer support Miṣṭah bin Uthātha. This was because the man had shown absolutely no regard for the relationship nor for the favours that Abū Bakr had all along been showing him and his family. At this verse 22 was revealed and Hadrat Abū Bakr, on hearing it, immediately said : "By God ! we do want that Allah should forgive us." Consequently he again started to help Miṣṭah and in a more liberal manner than before. According to Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, some other Companions besides Hadrat Abū Bakr, also had sworn that they would discontinue helping those who had taken an active part in the slander. After the revelation of this verse, all of them revoked their oaths and the ill-will that had been created by the mischief was gone.

Here a question may arise as to whether a person, who swears for something and later on revokes the oath on finding that there was no good in it and adopts a better and more virtuous course, should offer expiation for breaking the oath or not. One group of the jurists is of the opinion that adoption of the virtuous course itself is the expiation and nothing more needs to be done. They base their argument on this verse where Allah commanded Hadrat Abū Bakr to revoke his oath but did not require him to atone for it. They also cite a Tradition of the Holy Prophet in support of their argument, saying: "If anybody takes an oath for something and later on finds that another course is better and adopts it, his adoption of a better course by itself is the atonement for breaking the oath."

The other group is of the view that there is a clear Commandment in the Qur'ān concerning the breaking of oath (II : 225, V : 89), which has neither been abrogated by this verse nor clearly amended. Therefore the earlier Commandment stands. No doubt, Allah commanded Hadrat Abū Bakr to revoke his oath but He did not tell him that expiation was not necessary. As regards the Tradition of the Holy Prophet, it only means this that the sin of taking an oath for a wrong thing is wiped out when the right course is adopted ; it does not absolve one from making expiation for the oath itself. Another Tradition of the Holy Prophet clarifies this view. He said : "Whoso swears for something and then finds that another course is better than the one he had sworn for, he should adopt the better course and atone for his oath." This shows that expiation for breaking one's oath and expiation of the sin for not doing good are different things. The expiation for the first is to adopt the right course, and for the second the same as has been laid down in the Qur'ān. For further explanation, see E.N. 46 of Sūrah Ṣād.

21. The word *ghāfilāt* as used in the Text means the women who are simple, unpretentious souls, who do not know any artifice, who have pious hearts and have no idea of immorality. They cannot even imagine that their names could ever be associated with any slander. The Holy

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يَأْتِلِ أَوْلُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَى وَالسَّكِينِ
وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَيَعْفُوا وَيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ
اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ
عَلَيْهِمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ
يُوفِيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٧﴾
الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ
لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتَسَلِّمُوا
عَلَى أَهْلِهَا ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا
أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا
هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٠﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا
بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَ مَا
تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَ يَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ
ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ
مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَ يَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَ لَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ
مِنْهَا وَ لِيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۗ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ
أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ
أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ

Those among you, who are bountiful and persons of means, should not swear on oath that they would withhold their help from their relatives, the indigent and those who have left their homes for the cause of Allah: they should forgive and forbear. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.^{20*} 22

Those who charge with slander those Believing women, who are chaste but simple souls,²¹ are accursed in this world and in the Hereafter: there is a great punishment for them. They should not forget the Day when their own tongues and their own hands and feet will bear testimony in regard to their misdeeds.^{21(a)} On that Day Allah will give them the full recompense they deserve, and they will realize that Allah is the very Truth, Who makes the Truth manifest. 23-25

Impure women are for impure men and impure men for impure women, and pure women are for pure men and pure men for pure women. They are free from those scandals which the slanderers utter.²² There is forgiveness for them and honourable provision. 26

O Believers,²³ do not enter other houses than your own until you have the approval of the inmates²⁴ and have wished them peace; this is the best way for you: it is expected that you will observe it.²⁵ Then, if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter until you have been given permission,²⁶ and if you are told to go back, you should go back. This is a purer way for you;²⁷ and Allah has full knowledge of what you do. There is, however, no harm if you enter houses which are not dwelling places, but contain something useful for you;²⁸ Allah knows what you disclose and what you conceal. 27-29

O Prophet, enjoin the Believing men to restrain their gaze²⁹ and guard their private parts.³⁰ This is a more righteous way for them: Allah has knowledge of what they do. 30

And O Prophet, enjoin the Believing women to restrain their gaze³¹ and guard their private³² parts³³ and not to display their adornment³⁴ except that which is displayed of itself,³⁵ and to draw their veils over their bosoms³⁶ and not to display their adornment except before 31

*See Explanatory Notes 20-21 on page 113.

their husbands,³⁷ their fathers, the fathers of their husbands,³⁸ their sons and the sons of their husbands³⁹ (from other wives), their brothers,⁴⁰ their brothers' sons,⁴¹ their sisters' sons,⁴² their female associates⁴³ and those in their possession⁴⁴

Contd. from p. 113]

Prophet has said: "To slander chaste women is one of the seven 'deadly' sins." According to another Tradition cited by Ṭabarānī from Ḥadrat Ḥuzaifah, the Holy Prophet said: "To slander a pious woman suffices to ruin the good deeds of a hundred years."

21 (a). For explanation, see E.N. 55 of Sūrah Yā Sīn and E.N. 25 of Ḥā Mīm Sajdah.

22. This verse enunciates a fundamental principle: Impure men are a fit match for impure women and pious men are a fit match for pious women. It never happens that a man is good in all other aspects but is addicted to a solitary vice. As a matter of fact, his very habits, manners and demeanour, all contain a number of evil traits, which sustain and nourish that single vice. It is impossible that a man develops a vice all of a sudden without having any trace of its existence in his demeanour and way of life. This is a psychological truth which everybody experiences in the daily lives of the people. How is it then possible that a man who has all along lived a pure and morally clean life, will put up and continue to live for years in love with a wife who is adulterous? Can a woman be imagined who is an adulteress, but she does not manifest her evil character through her talk, gait, manners and deportment? Is it possible for a virtuous man of high character to live happily with a woman of this type? What is being suggested here is that people in future should not credulously put their belief in any rumour that reaches them. They should carefully see as to who is being accused and on what account and whether the accusation fairly sticks on the person or not. And when there exists no trace of evidence to support the accusation, people cannot believe it just because a foolish or wicked person has uttered it.

Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that evil things are for the evil people and good things for the good people: the good people are free from the evil things which the wicked people utter about them. Some others have interpreted it to mean that evil deeds only go with evil people and good deeds with good people: the pious people are free from the evil deeds which the wicked people ascribe to them. Still others interpret it to mean that evil and filthy talk is indulged in only by the evil and filthy people and good and pious talk only by the good and pious people: the pious people are free from the sort of talk that these mischievous people are indulging in. The words of the verse are comprehensive and can be interpreted in any of the three ways, but the first meaning that strikes the reader is the one that we have

adopted above, and the same fits in more meaningfully with the context than others.

23. The Commandments given in the beginning of the Sūrah were meant to help eradicate evil when it had actually appeared in society. The Commandments being given now are meant to prevent the very birth of evil, to reform society and root out the causes responsible for the creation and spread of evil. Before we study these Commandments, it will be useful to understand two things clearly :

First, the revelation of these Commandments immediately after the Divine appraisal of the incident of the "slander" clearly indicates that permeation of a calumny against the noble person of a wife of the Holy Prophet in the society, was the direct result of the existence of a sexually charged atmosphere, and in the sight of Allah there was no other way of cleansing society of the evil than of prohibiting free entry into other people's houses, discouraging free mixing of the sexes together, forbidding women to appear in their make up before the other men, excepting a small circle of close relatives, banning prostitution, exhorting men and women not to remain unmarried for long, and arranging marriages even of the slaves and slave-girls. In other words, the movement of the women without purdah and the presence of a large number of unmarried persons in society were, in the knowledge of Allah, the real causes that imperceptibly give rise to sensuality in society. It was this sexually charged atmosphere which kept the ears, eyes, tongues and hearts of the people ever ready to get involved in any real or fictitious scandal. Allah in His wisdom did not regard any other measure more suitable and effective than these Commandments to eradicate this evil ; otherwise He would have enjoined some other Commandments.

The second important thing to remember is that Divine Law does not merely forbid an evil or only prescribe a punishment for the offender, but it also puts an end to all those factors which provide occasions for the evil, or incite or force a person to commit it. It also imposes curbs on the causes, incentives and means leading to the evil so as to check the wrongdoer much before he actually commits the crime. It does not like that people should freely approach and loiter about near the border lines of sin and get caught and punished all the time. It does not merely act as a prosecutor but as a guide, reformer and helper, too. So it uses all kinds of moral, social and educational devices to help the people to safeguard themselves against evil and vice.

24. The Arabic word *tasta'nisū* in the Text has been generally interpreted to mean the same as *tasta'zinū*. There is, however, a fine difference between the two words which should not be lost sight of. Had the word in the Text been *tasta'zinū*, the verse would have meant: "Do not enter other people's houses until you have taken their permission". Allah has used *tasta'nisū* which is derived from the root

uns, meaning fondness, affection, regard, etc. According to this, the verse would mean: "Do not enter other people's houses until you are sure of their affection and regard for yourself." In other words, you should make sure that your entry in the house is not disagreeable to the inmates and you are sure of a welcome. That is why we have translated the word into 'approval' of the inmates instead of 'permission' of the inmates, because the word 'approval' expresses the sense of the original more precisely.

25. According to the Arab custom of the pre-Islamic days, people would enter each other's house freely without permission just by pronouncing 'good morning' or 'good evening'. This unannounced entry sometimes violated the privacy of the people and their women folk. Allah enjoined the principle that everybody has a right to privacy in his own house and no one is entitled to force his entry unannounced and without permission of the inmates. The rules and regulations enforced by the Holy Prophet in society on receipt of the above Commandment are given below serially :

(1) The 'right of privacy' was not merely confined to the question of entry in the houses, but it was declared as a common right according to which it is forbidden to peep into a house, glance from outside, or even read the other person's letter without his permission. According to Thaubān, who was a freed slave of the Holy Prophet, the Holy Prophet said: "When you have already cast a look into a house, what is then the sense in seeking permission for entry?" (Abū Da'ūd). Ḥaḍrat Huzail bin Shuraḥbīl has reported that a man came to see the Holy Prophet and sought permission for entry while standing just in front of the door. The Holy Prophet said to him: "Stand aside : the object of the Commandment for seeking permission is to prevent casting of looks inside the house." (Abū Da'ūd). The practice of the Holy Prophet was that whenever he went to see somebody, he would stand aside, to the right or the left of the door, and seek permission as it was not then usual to hang curtains on the doors. (Abū Da'ūd). Ḥaḍrat Anas, the attendant of the Holy Prophet, states that a man glanced into the room of the Holy Prophet from outside. The Holy Prophet at that time was holding an arrow in his hand. He advanced towards the man in a way as if he would thrust the arrow into his belly. (Abū Da'ūd). According to Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, the Holy Prophet said: "Whoever glances through the letter of his brother without his permission, glances into fire." (Abū Da'ūd). According to Muslim and Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "If someone peeps into your house, it will be no sin if you injure his eye with a piece of stone." In another Tradition, he has said: "The inmates of a house, who injure the eye of the man peeping into their house, are not liable to any punishment." Imām Shāfi'ī has taken this Commandment literally and permits smashing of the eye of the one who casts a glance like this. The Ḥanafīs, however,

do not take the Command in the literal sense. They express the opinion that it is applicable only in that case where an outsider forces his entry into a house in spite of the resistance from the inmates and has his eye or some other limb smashed in the scuffle. In such a case, no penalty will lie on the inmates. (*Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, p. 385).

(2) The jurists have included 'hearing' also under 'glancing'. For instance, if a blind man enters a house without permission, he will not be able to see anybody, but he will certainly be able to hear whatever is going on in the house. This also amounts to violation of the other person's right of privacy.

(3) The Command to seek permission is not only applicable in cases where a person wants to enter the other people's houses, but it also applies to entry in the house of one's own mother or sister. A man asked the Holy Prophet: "Sir, should I seek permission to enter my mother's house also?" The Holy Prophet replied that he should. The man stated that there was nobody beside him to look after her, and asked whether it was necessary to get permission every time he wanted to go in. The Holy Prophet replied: "Yes; would you like that you should see your mother in a naked state?" (Ibn Jarīr quoting from 'Atā bin Yasār). According to a saying of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, one should seek permission even when going to see one's own mother or sister. (Ibn Kathīr). He has suggested that even when a person goes to visit one's wife in one's own house, he should announce his arrival by coughing, etc. It is related by his wife Zainab that 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd would always announce his arrival by coughing, etc. and never liked that he should enter the house unannounced all of a sudden. (Ibn Jarīr).

(4) The only exception to the general rule is that no permission is needed in case of an emergency or a calamity like theft, fire, etc. One can go for help without permission in such cases.

(5) In the beginning when the system of seeking permission was introduced, people did not know the exact procedure to be followed. Once a man came to the Prophet's house and shouted at the door, "Should I be in?" The Holy Prophet said to his maid servant, Rouḍah, "Go and instruct him about the correct way. He should say: *Assālam-o-'alaikum* (peace be upon you): May I come in?" (Ibn Jarīr, Abū Da'ūd). Jābir bin 'Abdullah says that once he went to the Holy Prophet's house in connection with certain liabilities of his father and knocked at the door. The Holy Prophet asked: "Who is it?" I replied, "It's me." The Holy Prophet thereupon repeated twice or thrice: "It's me, it's me!" That is, how can one understand from this who you are? (Abū Da'ūd).

A man named Kaladah bin Ḥanbal went to see the Holy Prophet and got seated without the customary salutation. The Holy Prophet told him to go out and come in again after calling: *Assalām-o-'alaikum* (peace be upon you). (Abū Da'ūd). Thus, the correct method of seeking

permission was to disclose one's identity first and then ask for permission. It is related that whenever Ḥaḍrat 'Umar went to see the Holy Prophet, he would say: "Assalām-o-'alaikum yā Rasūl-Allah, I am 'Umar: May I enter!" (Abū Da'ūd). The Holy Prophet enjoined that permission should be asked thrice at the most. If there is no reply even at the third call, one should come back. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd). The same was his own practice. Once he went to the house of Ḥaḍrat Sa'd bin 'Ubādah and sought permission twice after greeting with: *Assalām-o-'alaikum wa Raḥmatullah* (peace be upon you and mercy of Allah), but there was no response. After calling for the third time when he received no response, he turned back. Sa'd came out running from the house, and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I was hearing you all right, but I desired to have Allah's peace and mercy invoked upon me through your sacred tongue as often as possible; therefore, I was replying to you in a low voice." (Abū Da'ūd, Aḥmad). The three calls as enjoined above should not be made in quick succession, but at suitable intervals so as to allow sufficient time to the inmates to make the response in case they are not free to do so.

(6) The permission for entry should come from the master of the house himself or from some other reliable inmate like a servant or a responsible person, who gives permission on behalf of the master. One should not enter the house on the word of a mere child.

(7) Undue insistence for permission to enter or to keep standing at the door obstinately even after refusal, is not permissible. If no entry is permitted even after three calls, or the master refuses to see, one should go back.

26. Entry into an empty house is not allowed unless permitted as such by the master of the house. One may, for instance, have told a visitor or sent him a message to wait in his room till his arrival. The mere fact that there is nobody in the house or the call is not answered, does not entitle anybody to enter without permission.

27. That is, nobody should mind if entry is refused, for everybody has a right to refuse to meet another person, or offer a plea if otherwise busy. The Command "Go back", according to the jurists, means going back in the literal sense and moving away from the door. Nobody has any right to compel the other person for a meeting or to embarrass him by standing obstinately at his door.

28. "Houses which are not dwelling places" are the hotels, inns, guest houses, shops, staging bungalows, etc. which are generally open to all people.

29. The word *ghaḍḍ* means to reduce, shorten or lower down something. Accordingly, *ghaḍḍ baṣar* is generally translated as 'lowering the gaze' or 'keeping it lowered'. But the Command of *ghaḍḍ baṣar* does not imply that the gaze should always be kept lowered. It only means to imply that one should restrain one's gaze and avoid casting of

looks freely. That is, if it is not desirable to see a thing, one should turn the eyes away and avoid having a look at it. The restriction of a 'restrained gaze' is applicable only in a limited sphere. The context in which the words occur shows that this restriction applies to the men's gazing at women, or casting looks at the *satar* of the other persons, or fixing the eyes at indecent scenes.

The details of this Divine Commandment as explained in the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet are given below:

(1) It is not lawful for a man to cast a full gaze at the other women except at his own wife or the *maḥram* women of his family. The chance look is pardonable but not the second look which one casts when one feels the lure of the object. The Holy Prophet has termed such gazing and glancing as wickedness of the eyes. He has said that man commits adultery with all his sensory organs. The evil look at the other woman is the adultery of the eyes; lustful talk is the adultery of the tongue; relishing the other woman's voice is adultery of the ears; and touching her body with the hand or walking for an unlawful purpose is adultery of the hands and feet. After these preliminaries the sexual organs either bring the act of adultery to completion or leave it incomplete. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd).

According to a Tradition related by Haḍrat Buraidah, the Holy Prophet instructed Haḍrat 'Alī: "O 'Alī, do not cast a second look after the first look. The first look is pardonable but not the second one." (Tirmizī, Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd). Haḍrat Jarīr bin 'Abdullah Bajalī says that he asked the Holy Prophet, "What should I do if I happen to cast a chance look?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Turn your eyes away or lower your gaze." (Muslim, Aḥmad, Tirmizī, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī). Haḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd quotes the Holy Prophet as having said: "Allah says that the gaze is one of the poisonous arrows of Satan. Whoever forsakes it, out of His fear, he will be rewarded with a faith whose sweetness he will relish in his own heart." (Ṭabarānī). According to a Tradition related by Abū Umāmah, the Holy Prophet said: "If a Muslim happens to glance at the charms of a woman and then turns his eyes away, Allah will bless his worship and devotion and will make it all the more sweet." (Musnad Aḥmad). Imām Ja'far Sādiq has quoted from his father, Imām Muḥammad Bāqir, who has quoted Haḍrat Jābir bin 'Abdullah Anṣārī as saying: "On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, Faḍal bin 'Abbās, who was a young cousin of the Holy Prophet, was riding with him on the camelback during the return journey from Mash'ar al-Ḥarām. When they came to a few women passing on the way, Faḍal started looking at them. Thereupon the Holy Prophet put his hand on his face and turned it to the other side." (Abū Da'ūd). On another occasion during the same Pilgrimage, a woman of the clan of Khath'am stopped the Holy Prophet on the way and sought clarification about a certain matter pertaining to Ḥajj. Faḍal

bin 'Abbās fixed his gaze at her, but the Holy Prophet turned his face to the other side. (Bukhārī, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizi).

(2) Nobody should have the misunderstanding that the Command to restrain the gaze was enjoined because the women were allowed to move about freely with open faces, for if veiling of the face had already been enjoined, the question of restraining or not restraining the gaze would not have arisen. This argument is incorrect rationally as well as factually. It is incorrect rationally because even when veiling of the face is the usual custom, occasions can arise where a man and a woman come face to face with each other suddenly, or when a veiled woman has to uncover her face under necessity. Then even if the Muslim women observe purdah, there will be non-Muslim women who will continue to move about unveiled. Thus, the Commandment to lower the gaze or restrain the eyes, does not necessarily presume existence of a custom allowing the women to move about with unveiled faces. It is incorrect factually because the custom of purdah which was introduced after the revelation of the Commandments in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb included veiling of the face, and this is supported by a number of Traditions relating to the time of the Holy Prophet himself. Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah in her statement relating to the incident of the "slander", which has been narrated on the authority of reliable reporters, has said: "When I came back to the camp, and found that the caravan had left, I lay down and was overpowered by sleep. In the morning when Ṣafwān bin Mu'attal passed that way he recognised me because he had seen me before the Commandment of purdah had been sent down. On recognising me he exclaimed: *Innā lillāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'un*: 'To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return'; and I awoke and covered my face with my sheet." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Hishām). Abū Da'ūd contains an incident that when the son of Umm Khallād was killed in a battle, she came to the Holy Prophet to enquire about him and was wearing the veil as usual. It was natural to presume that on such a sad occasion one is liable to lose one's balance and ignore the restrictions of purdah. But when questioned she said, "I have certainly lost my son but not my modesty." Another Tradition in Abū Da'ūd quoted on the authority of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah relates that a woman handed an application to the Holy Prophet from behind a curtain. The Holy Prophet enquired: "Is it a man's hand or a woman's?" She replied that it was a woman's. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said: "If it is a woman's hand, the nails at least should have been coloured with henna!" As regards the two incidents relating to the occasion of Ḥajj, which we have mentioned above, they cannot be used as an argument to prove that the veil was not in vogue in the time of the Holy Prophet. This is because wearing of the veil is prohibited in the state of *iḥrām*. However, even in that state pious women did not like to uncover their faces before the other men. Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah has stated that during the Farewell Pilgrimage

when they were moving towards Makkah in the state of *ihrām*, the women would lower down their head sheets over their faces whenever the travellers passed by them, and would uncover their faces as soon as they had passed by. (Abū Da'ūd).

(3) There are certain exceptions to the Command of lowering the gaze or restraining the look. These exceptions relate to occasions when it is really necessary to see a woman, for instance, when a man intends to marry her. It is not only permissible to see the woman in such a case but even commendable. Mughīrah bin Shu'bah has stated, "I wanted to marry in a certain family. The Holy Prophet asked me whether I had seen the girl or not. When I replied in the negative, he said: 'Have a look at her; this will enhance harmonious relationship between you two.'" (Aḥmad, Tirmizī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Dārimī). According to a Tradition related by Abū Hurairah, a man wanted to marry in a family of the Anṣār. The Holy Prophet asked him to have a look at the girl, for the Anṣār usually had a defect in their eyes. (Muslim, Nasā'ī, Aḥmad). According to Jābir bin 'Abdullah, the Holy Prophet said: "When a person from among you wants to marry a woman, he should have a look at her to satisfy himself that there is some quality in the woman which induces him to marry her." (Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd). According to another Tradition emanating from Abū Humaidah and quoted in Musnad Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet said that there was no harm in such a procedure. He also permitted that the girl may be seen without her being aware of it. From this the jurists have concluded that there is no harm in looking at a woman when it is really necessary. For instance, there is no harm in looking at a suspect woman when investigating a crime, or in the judge's looking at a female witness, who appears in the court, or in the physician's looking at a female patient, etc.

(4) The intention of the Command to restrain the gaze also implies that no man or woman should look at the private parts of the other man or woman. The Holy Prophet has said: "No man should look at the *satar* of another man nor a woman at the *satar* of another woman." (Aḥmad, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī). Ḥaḍrat 'Alī has quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: "Do not look at the thigh of another person, living or dead". (Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah).

30. "Guard their private parts": Abstain from illicit sexual gratification and from exposing their *satar* before others. For males, the *satar* is the part of the body from the navel to the knee, and it is not permissible to expose that part of the body intentionally before anybody except one's own wife. (Daraqūṭnī, Baihaqī). Ḥaḍrat Jarhad Aslamī states that once he was sitting in the company of the Holy Prophet with his thigh exposed. The Holy Prophet said: "Do you not know that the thigh has to be kept concealed." (Tirmizī, Abū Da'ūd, Mu'aṭṭā).

Ḥadīrat 'Alī reports that the Holy Prophet said: "Do not expose your thigh." (Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah). Not only is the *satar* to be kept concealed before others but even when alone. The Holy Prophet has warned: "Beware, never remain naked, for with you are those (that is, the angels of goodness and mercy), who never leave you alone except when you ease yourself or you go to your wives. So feel shy of them and give them due respect." (Tirmizī). According to another Tradition, the Holy Prophet said: "Guard your *satar* from everybody except from your wife and your slave girl." The questioner asked, "Even when we are alone?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Yes, even when alone, for Allah has a greater right that you should feel shy of Him." (Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī, Ibn Mājah).

31. The Commandments of restraining the gaze for women are the same as for men. They should not glance intentionally at the other men, and if they happen to cast a chance look, they should turn their eyes away; and they should abstain from looking at the *satar* of others. However, the Commandments relating to the men's looking at women are a little different from those relating to the women's looking at men. On the one hand, there is an incident related in a Tradition saying that Ḥadīrat Umm Salamah and Ḥadīrat Umm Maimūnah, wives of the Holy Prophet, were sitting with him when Ibn Umm Maktūm, a blind Companion, made his appearance. The Holy Prophet said to his wives: "Conceal your faces from him." The wives said, "O Messenger of Allah: Is he not a blind man? Neither will he see us nor recognize us." Thereupon the Holy Prophet remarked: "Are you two also blind? Do you not see him?" Ḥadīrat Umm Salamah has clarified that this incident occurred at a time when the Commandments about the observance of *purdah* had already been sent down. (Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī). This is also supported by a Tradition in Mu'aṭṭā saying that a blind man came to see Ḥadīrat 'Ā'ishah and she observed *purdah* from him. When asked as to why she observed *purdah* when the man could not see her, she replied: "But I do see him." On the other hand, there is a different Tradition from Ḥadīrat 'Ā'ishah. In 7 A.H. a deputation of the negroes came to Al-Madīnah and they gave a performance of physical skill in the compound of the Prophet's Mosque. The Holy Prophet himself showed their performance to Ḥadīrat 'Ā'ishah. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad). In another case, we find that when Fāṭimah bint Qais was irrevocably divorced by her husband, the question arose as to where she should pass her *'iddah* (the prescribed waiting term after divorce or death of husband). The Holy Prophet first told her to stay with Umm Sharīk Anṣārī, but then instructed her to stay in the house of Ibn Umm Maktūm, where she could stay with greater freedom as he was a blind man. He did not approve of her staying in the house of Umm Sharīk because she was a

rich lady and her house was frequented by the Companions whom she entertained generously. (Muslim, Abū Da'ūd). Read together these Traditions show that the restrictions about the women's looking at men are not so hard as about the men's looking at women. While it is forbidden for women to sit face to face with men, it is not unlawful if they cast a look at men while passing on the way or see a harmless performance by them from a distance. There is also no harm for women to see the other men in case of real need if they are living in the same house. Imām Ghazzālī and Ibn Ḥajar Asqalānī have also reached almost the same conclusion. Shaukānī in his *Nail al-Auṭār* has quoted Ibn Ḥajar as saying: "Such a permission in respect of women is also supported by the fact that they have always enjoyed this type of freedom in outdoor duties. While they came out veiled when visiting the mosques, or moving in the streets, or during the journey, so that men may not gaze at them, the men were never commanded to use the veil so that women may not gaze at them. This shows that the Commandments in respect of the two sexes are different." (Vol. VI, p. 101). However, it is not at all permissible that women should gaze leisurely at men and draw pleasure of the eye in doing so.

32. That is, they should abstain from illicit gratification of their sex desire as well as from exposing their *satar* before others. Though the commandments for men in this respect are the same as for women, the boundaries of *satar* for women are different from those prescribed for men. Moreover, the female *satar* with respect to men is different from that with respect to women.

The female *satar* with respect to men is the entire body, excluding only the hand and the face, which should not be exposed before any other man, not even the brother and father, except the husband. The woman is not allowed to wear a thin or a tight fitting dress which might reveal the skin or the outlines of the body. According to a Tradition from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, once her sister Asmā' came before the Holy Prophet in a thin dress. The Holy Prophet immediately turned his face away and said: "O Asmā', when a woman has attained her maturity, it is not permissible that any part of her body should be exposed except the face and the hand." (Abū Da'ūd). Ibn Jarīr has related a similar incident from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah saying that once the daughter of 'Abdullah bin Ṭufail, who was her mother's son from her former husband, came to her house on a visit. When the Holy Prophet (Allah's peace be upon him) entered the house, he saw her but turned his face to the other side. Ḥadart 'Ā'ishah said: "O Messenger of Allah, she is my niece." Thereupon the Holy Prophet remarked: "When a woman reaches the age of puberty, it is not lawful for her to display her body except the hand and the face. (Then he indicated what he meant by the hand by gripping his own hand from the wrist so that there was hardly a breadth left between his grip and the palm of the hand)." The only relaxation permitted in

this connection is that a woman can uncover only that much of her body before her close relatives (for example, her brother, father, etc.) as is absolutely necessary for attending to the household duties. For instance, she can roll up her sleeves while kneading the flour, or tuck up her trousers while washing the floor.

The boundaries of female *satar* with respect to women are the same as the boundaries of the male *satar* with respect to men, which is the part of the body from the navel to the knee. This does not, however, mean that a woman should appear half naked before other women. It only means that while it is obligatory to keep the part of body from the navel to the knee duly covered, it is not so in case of other parts.

33. It should be carefully noted that the demands that Divine Law makes from women are not only those it has made from men, that is restraining of looks and guarding of the private parts, but it makes some other demands from them also, which it has not made from men. This shows that men and women are not identical in this respect.

34. "Adornment" includes attractive clothes, ornaments and other decorations of the head, face, hand, feet, etc. which the women usually employ, and is expressed by the modern word 'make-up'. The injunction that this 'make-up' should not be displayed before others is discussed in detail in the following Notes.

35. Different interpretations given by different commentators of this verse have greatly confused its real meaning. All that is obviously meant is that "women should not display their make-up and adornment" except that "which is displayed of itself" and is beyond their control. This clearly means that women should not purposely and intentionally display their make-up, but there is no accountability if the make-up becomes displayed without any purpose or intention on their part; for instance, the head-wrapper's being blown aside by the wind thus exposing the adornment, or the outer-garment itself which cannot be concealed but which nevertheless has attraction being a part of the female dress. This very interpretation of this verse has been given by Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Ḥaṣan Baṣrī, Ibn Sīrīn and Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī. On the contrary, some other commentators have interpreted the verse to mean "all those parts of the body which usually remain exposed or uncovered" and in this they include the hands and the face with all their adornments. This is the view of Ḥadrat Ibn 'Abbās and his followers, and a large number of the Ḥanafī jurists have accepted it. (*Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān*, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Vol. III, pp. 388-389). Thus, according to them, it is permissible for a woman to move out freely with the uncovered face in full make-up and adornment of the hands

We are, however, unable to subscribe to this view. There is a world of difference between "displaying something" and "its becoming displayed of itself." The first implies 'intention' and the second 'compulsion' and a state of helplessness. Moreover, such an interpretation also goes against

the traditions which state that the women never moved out with open and uncovered faces in the time of the Holy Prophet after the Commandments of purdah had been sent down. These Commandments implied veiling of the face as well, and the veil had become a part of the female dress except during *Hajj* when one has to be in the prescribed state of *iḥrām* and keep the face uncovered. Another argument that is advanced in support of this view is that the hands and the face are not included in the *satar* of the woman, whereas *satar* and purdah are two entirely different things. Sanctity of *satar* is such that it cannot be violated even before the *maḥram* males like the father, brother, etc. As for purdah it is over and above *satar* which is meant to segregate women from non-*maḥram* males; the discussion here relates to the Commandments of purdah and not to *satar*.

36. In the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, women used to wear a sort of head-band, which was tied in a knot at the rear of the head. The slit of the shirt in the front partly remained open exposing the front of the neck and the upper part of the bosom. There was nothing except the shirt to cover the breasts, and the hair was worn in a couple or two of plaits hanging behind like tails. (*Al-Kashshāf*, Vol. II, p. 90, and *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. III, pp. 283-284). At the revelation of this verse, the head-wrapper (*dopatta*) was introduced among the Muslim women, which was meant to cover the head, the breasts, and the back completely. The way the Muslim women responded to this Command has been described by *Hadrat 'Ā'ishah* in a vivid manner. She states that when *Sūrah An-Nūr* was revealed and the people learnt of its contents from the Holy Prophet, they immediately went back to their houses and recited the verses before their wives, daughters and sisters. There was an instantaneous response. The *Anṣār* women, one and all, immediately got up and made wrappers from whatever piece of cloth that was handy. The next morning all the women who came to the Prophet's Mosque for prayers were dressed in wrappers. In another tradition *Hadrat 'Ā'ishah* says that thin cloth was discarded and the women selected only coarse cloth for the purpose. (*Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. III, p. 284, *Abū Da'ūd*).

The very nature and object of the Command demanded that the wrapper should not be made out of fine and thin cloth. The *Anṣār* women immediately understood the real object and knew what type of cloth was intended to be used. The Law-Giver himself clarified this and did not leave it to be interpreted by the people. *Diḥyā Kalbī* states : "Once a length of fine Egyptian muslin was presented to the Holy Prophet. He gave a piece of it to me and said, 'Use one part of it for your shirt, and give the rest of it to your wife for a wrapper, but tell her that she should stitch another piece of cloth on the inner side so that the body may not be displayed through it.'" (*Abū Da'ūd*).

37. This verse describes the circle in which a woman can move freely with all her make-up and adornment. Outside this circle she is not allowed to appear with make-up before the other people, whether they are relatives or strangers. The Commandment implies that she should not display her embellishments outside this limited circle, intentionally or through carelessness. However, what becomes displayed incidentally, in spite of care and concern, or what cannot be concealed, it is excused by Allah.

38. 'Fathers' include grandfathers and great grandfathers as well, both paternal and maternal. Accordingly a woman can appear before her own and her husband's grandfathers just as she can appear before her own father and father-in-law.

39. 'Sons' include grandsons and great grandsons from the male or female offspring. No distinction is to be made between the real sons and the step-sons.

40. 'Brothers' include real and stepbrothers.

41. 'Sons of brothers and sisters' include sons, grandsons and great grandsons of all the three kinds of brothers and sisters.

42. After the relatives the other people are now being mentioned. But before we proceed further, it would be useful to understand three things in order to avoid confusion.

First, some jurists hold that the freedom of movement and display of adornment by a woman is restricted to the circle of relatives mentioned in this verse. All others, even the real paternal and maternal uncles, are excluded from this list and a woman should observe purdah from them because they have not been mentioned in the Qur'ān. This is, however, not a correct view. Let alone the real uncles, the Holy Prophet disallowed Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah to observe purdah even from her foster uncles. A tradition quoted in *Sihāḥ Sitta* and *Musnad Aḥmad* on the authority of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah says that once Aflaḥ, brother of Abul Qu'ais, came to see her and sought permission to enter the house. But since the Commandment of purdah had been received, Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah refused him permission. On this Aflaḥ sent back the word saying, "You are my niece : you were suckled by my brother Abul Qu'ais's wife." But Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah still was hesitant whether it was permissible to appear unveiled before such a relative or not. In the meantime the Holy Prophet arrived and he ruled that he could see her. This shows that the Holy Prophet himself did not interpret the verse in the way these jurists do that it was lawful to appear unveiled only before those relatives who have been mentioned in the verse and not before others. He interpreted it to mean that purdah need not be observed from those relatives with whom marriage is prohibited, for instance, paternal and maternal uncles, son-in-law and foster relatives. Ḥadrat Ḥasan Baṣri from among the followers has expressed the same opinion and the same has been supported by 'Allāma Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his *Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān*. (Vol. III, p. 390).

Secondly, there is the question of those relatives with whom marriage is not permanently prohibited; they neither fall in the category of *maḥram* relatives (that women may freely appear before them with adornment) nor in the category of complete strangers that they should observe full purdah from them as from others. What should be the right course between the two extremes has not been determined by the *Shari'ah* for such a course cannot possibly be determined. The observance of purdah or otherwise in such cases will inevitably depend on the mutual relationship, age of the woman and of men, family relations and contacts and other circumstances (e.g. residence in the same house or in different houses). The personal example of the Holy Prophet himself in this matter gives us the same guidance. A large number of traditions confirm that Ḥadat Asmā', daughter of Abū Bakr, who was a sister-in-law of the Holy Prophet, appeared unveiled before him and no purdah, at least of the face and hands, was observed by her. This same position continued till the Farewell Pilgrimage which took place just a few months before the death of the Holy Prophet. (Abū Da'ūd). Similarly Ḥadrat Umm Hānī, daughter of Abū Ṭālib and a first cousin of the Holy Prophet, appeared before him till the end without ever observing purdah of the face and hands. She herself has narrated an incident pertaining to the conquest of Makkah, which confirms the same. (Abū Da'ūd). On the contrary, we see that Ḥadrat 'Abbās sends his son Fadal, and Rabī'ah bin Ḥārith bin 'Abdul Muṭṭalib (a first cousin of the Holy Prophet) his son 'Abdul Muṭṭalib before the Holy Prophet with the request for a job, as they could not be married till they became earning members of the family. They both see the Holy Prophet in the house of his wife Zainab, who is a first cousin of Fadal and is similarly related to the father of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib bin Rabī'ah. But she does not appear before them and talks to them from behind a curtain in the presence of the Holy Prophet. (Abū Da'ūd). Taking the two kinds of precedents together we come to the same conclusion as we have stated above.

Thirdly, in cases where the relationship itself becomes doubtful, purdah should be observed even from the *maḥram* relatives. Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Da'ūd have related a case where Saudah, a wife of the Holy Prophet, had a brother born of a slave woman. 'Utbah, the father of Saudah and the boy, left a will enjoining his brother, Sa'd bin Abī Waqqās, to look after the boy as a nephew for he was from his own seed. When the case came before the Holy Prophet, he rejected the claim of Ḥadrat Sa'd, saying: "The boy belongs to him on whose bed he was born; as for the adulterer, let stones and pebbles be his lot." But at the same time he told Ḥadrat Saudah to observe purdah from the boy because it was doubtful whether he was really her brother.

43. The Arabic word *nisā-i-hinna* means "their female associates". Before we consider what women are exactly meant, it is worth noting that the word used here is not *an-nisā*, which merely means "women", but

nisā-i-hinna which means "their female associates". In the former case, it would be quite permissible for a Muslim woman to appear unveiled before all sorts of women and display her adornment. The use of *nisā-i-hinna*, however, has circumscribed her freedom within a specific circle. As to what specific circle of women is implied, the commentators and jurists have expressed different opinions.

According to one group, the "female associates" mean only the Muslim women; as for the non-Muslim women, whether *zimmis* or otherwise, they are excluded and *purdah* should be observed from them as from men. Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Ibn Juraij hold this opinion and cite the following incident in support thereof: Caliph 'Umar wrote to Ḥadrat Abū 'Ubaidah: "I hear that some Muslim women have started going to public baths along with the non-Muslim women. It is not permissible for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day that she should expose her body before the women other than of her own community." On receipt of this letter Ḥadrat Abū 'Ubaidah was much upset, and he cried out: "May the face of the woman who goes to the public baths to whiten her complexion be blackened on the Last Day!" (Ibn Jarīr, Baihaqī, Ibn Kathīr).

Another group, which includes Imām Rāzī, is of the view that "female associates" are all women without exception. But it is not possible to accept this view as in that case *an-nisā* should have sufficed and there was no need to use *nisā-i-hinna*.

The third opinion, and this appears to be reasonable and nearer the Qur'ānic Text, is that "their female associates" mean those familiar and known women with whom a woman usually comes into contact in her daily life and who share in her household chores, etc. whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim. The object here is to exclude those women from the circle who are either strangers whose cultural and moral background is not known or whose antecedents are apparently doubtful, which make them unreliable. This view is also supported by the authentic Traditions which state that *zimmī* women used to visit the wives of the Holy Prophet. The real thing to be considered in this connection would be the moral character and not the religious belief. Muslim women can meet and have intimate social contacts with noble, modest and virtuous women, who come from well-known and reliable families even if they are non-Muslim. But they must observe *purdah* from immodest, immoral and vulgar women even if they happen to be "Muslims". Their company from the moral viewpoint is as dangerous as of other men. As for contacts with unknown, unfamiliar women, they may at the most be treated like non-*maḥram* relatives. A woman may uncover her face and hands before them but she must keep the rest of her body and adornments concealed.

44. There is a good deal of difference of opinion among the jurists about the correct meaning of this injunction. One group holds that this

refers only to the slave girls owned by a lady. Accordingly they interpret the Divine Command to mean that the Muslim woman can display her adornment before a slave girl, whether she is an idolatress or a Jew or a Christian, but she cannot appear before a slave man even if he is legally owned by her; for purposes of purdah, he is to be treated just like a free male stranger. This is the view of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Mujāhid, Ḥasan Baṣrī, Ibn Sīrīn, Sa'īd bin Musayyab, Ṭā'ūs and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, and a saying of Imām Shāfi'ī also supports this. They argue that the slave is not a *maḥram* to the lady; if he is freed, he can marry his former owner. Therefore the mere fact of his being a slave cannot by itself entitle him to be treated like the male *maḥrams* and allow the lady to appear freely before him. The question, why should the words "those in their possession" which are general and applicable to both slaves and slave girls, be restricted to mean only slave girls, is answered by these jurists like this: Though the words are general, the context and background in which they occur make them specifically applicable to slave girls only. The words "those in their possession" occur just after "their female associates" in the verse; therefore one could understand that the reference was to a woman's relatives and other associates; this could lead to the misunderstanding that the slave girls perhaps were excluded; the words "those in their possession" therefore were used to clarify that a woman could display her adornments before the slave girls as before her free female associates.

The other group holds that the words "those in their possession" include both the slaves and the slave girls. This is the view of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, Umm Salamah and some learned scholars of the house of the Holy Prophet and also of Imām Shāfi'ī. They do not argue merely on the basis of the general meaning of the words, but they also cite precedents from the *Sunnah* in support of their view. For instance, the incident that the Holy Prophet went to the house of his daughter, Ḥadrat Fāṭimah, along with his slave 'Abdullah bin Musa'dah al-Fazārī. She was at that time wearing a sheet which would leave the feet exposed if she tried to cover the head, and the head exposed if she tried to cover the feet. The Holy Prophet felt her embarrassment and said: "No harm: there are only your father and your slave!" (Abū Da'ūd, Aḥmad, Baihaqī on the authority of Anas bin Mālik). Ibn 'Asākir has stated that the Holy Prophet had given that slave to Ḥadrat Fāṭimah, who brought him up and then freed him. (But the man turned out to be an ungrateful wretch; in the battle of Ṣiffīn, he was the bitterest opponent of Ḥadrat 'Alī and a zealous supporter of Amīr Mu'āwiyah). They also quote the following words of the Holy Prophet in support of their stand: "When any of you agrees to a deed of emancipation with her slave, and the slave has the necessary means to buy his freedom, she (the owner) should observe purdah from him." (Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī, Ibn Mājah on the authority of Umm Salamah).

التَّائِبِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْأَرْبَابَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوْ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى
 عَوْرَتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ
 وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَانكِحُوا الْأَيَامَى
 مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۖ إِن يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ
 مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَيْسَتَعْفِيفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا
 حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتِغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ
 فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا ۗ وَآتُوهُمْ مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ
 وَلَا تَكْرَهُوا فَتِيَّتَكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ ۚ إِنِ ارْتَدَّ تَحَصَّنَا لِيَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ
 الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَمَنْ يُكْرِهْمُنَّ فَانِ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَ
 لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُّبِينَاتٍ وَمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَ
 مَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا
 مِصْبَاحٌ ۗ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۗ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ
 شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ ۗ لَيَسَّادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ
 لَمْ تَسْسُهُ نَارٌ ۗ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۗ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ
 اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ فِي بُيُوتِ أَرْنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ
 تَرْفَعَهُ وَيَذَكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ ۗ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٤٠﴾ رِجَالٌ
 لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ
 يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٤١﴾ لِيَجْزِيََهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا
 عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرِثُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَ

and male attendants incapable of sex desire⁴⁵ and those boys 31
 who have not yet attained knowledge of sex matters concern-
 ing women;⁴⁶ also forbid them to stamp their feet on the
 ground lest their hidden ornaments should be displayed.⁴⁷

O Believers, turn all together towards Allah:⁴⁸ it is ex-
 pected that you will attain true success.⁴⁹

Arrange marriages between the single men and women 32-33
 among you⁵⁰ and between your slave men and slave women,
 who are righteous;^{51, 52} if they be indigent, Allah will
 provide means for them out of His bounty:⁵³ Allah has
 boundless resources and He is All-Knowing. And those, who
 cannot find a match, should observe continence till Allah
 provides them with means out of His bounty⁵⁴.

And if those who are in your possession, ask for a deed
 of emancipation, execute the deed of emancipation with
 them,⁵⁶ provided that you find some good in them;⁵⁷ and give
 them something out of the means Allah has given you.⁵⁸

And do not force your slave-girls into prostitution for
 your own worldly gains when they themselves want to keep
 chaste;⁵⁹ and if anyone forces them into it, after such a com-
 pulsion Allah will be forgiving and merciful for them.

We have sent down to you Revelations giving clear 34
 guidance and cited examples of the peoples who went before
 you to serve as warning and We have imparted admonitions
 for the God-fearing.⁶⁰

Allah⁶¹ is the light of the heavens and the earth:⁶² His 35-38
 light (in the universe) may be likened (to the light of) a lamp
 in a niche: the lamp is in a glass shade: the glass shade is
 like a glittering star and the lamp is lit with the olive oil of a
 blessed tree⁶³ which is neither eastern nor western:⁶⁴ its oil is
 (so fine) as if it were going to shine forth by itself though no
 fire touched it: (as though all the means of increasing) light
 upon light (were provided⁶⁵); Allah guides to His light whom-
 ever He wills.⁶⁶ He cites parables to make the Message clear
 to the people; He has perfect knowledge of everything.⁶⁷
 (Those who obtain guidance to His light are found) in the

houses which He has enjoined to raise up and to mention His name therein.⁶⁸ In them such people glorify Him morning and evening as are not diverted by trade and merchandise from remembering Him and from establishing *Ṣalāt* and paying *Zakāt*, for they fear the Day when the hearts will be overturned and the eyes will become petrified. (And they behave like this) so that Allah may reward them for their excellent deeds and, in addition to it, show His favour to them out of His bounty: Allah provides without stint⁶⁹ for anyone He pleases.

45. The literal translation of the Text would be: "those from among the men who are your subordinates and have no desire." The obvious meaning is that apart from the *maḥram* males, a Muslim woman can display her adornment only before the man who satisfies two conditions: firstly, he should be in a subordinate capacity, and secondly, he should be free from sexual urges either due to advanced age, impotence, mental weakness, poverty or low social position, so that he cannot cherish the desire or have the boldness to think evilly of his master's wife, daughter, sister or mother. Anybody who studies this injunction in the right spirit with a view to obeying it, and not for the sake of finding ways and means of escaping from or violating it, will readily appreciate that the bearers, cooks, chauffeurs and other grown up servants employed these days in the houses do not fall in this category. The following clarifications given by the commentators and the jurists of this point would show the type of men envisaged in the verse:

- Ibn 'Abbās: This implies a man who is a mere simpleton and has no interest in women.
- Qatādah: A poor man who is attached to you merely for his sustenance.
- Mujāhid: A fool who only needs food and has no desire for women.
- Sha'bi: The one who is a subordinate, entirely dependent on his master, and cannot have the boldness to cast an evil look at the women-folk of the house.
- Ibn Zaid: The one who remains attached to a family for such a long time that he is regarded as a member brought up in that house, and who has no desire for the women of the house. He is there merely because he gets his sustenance from the family.
- Tā'ūs & Zuhri: An idiot who does not cherish the desire for the women nor has the courage to do so. (*Ibn Jarīr*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 95-96.)

Ibn Kathīr, Vol. III, p. 285).

The best explanation in this regard is the incident that happened in the time of the Holy Prophet, which has been quoted by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī and Aḥmad on the authority of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah and Umm Salamah. There was a certain eunuch in Madīnah who was allowed free access to the wives of the Holy Prophet and the other women of the city, on the assumption that he being incapable of sex was free from the sexual urge. One day when the Holy Prophet went to the house of his wife, Umm Salamah, he heard him talking to her brother, 'Abdullah bin Abī Umayyah. He was telling 'Abdullah that if Ṭā'if was taken the following day, he should try to have Bādia, daughter of Ghailān Thaqafī. And then he started praising Bādia's beauty and her physical charms and even went to the extent of describing her private parts. On hearing this the Holy Prophet said: "O enemy of Allah! you seem to have seen her through." Then he ordered that the women should observe purdah from him and he should not be allowed to enter the houses in future. After this he turned him out of Madīnah and forbade the other eunuchs also to enter the houses, because the women did not mind their presence, while they would describe the women of one house before the other men of other houses in the society. This shows that the words "incapable of sex desire" do not merely imply physical impotence. Anyone who is physically unfit but cherishes sex desire in the heart and takes interest in women, can become the cause of many mischiefs.

46. That is, the children who do not yet have their sex feelings aroused. This may apply to boys of 11 to 12 at the most. Older boys start having sex feelings though they may still be immature otherwise.

47. The Holy Prophet did not restrict this injunction to the jingle of the ornaments, but has derived from it the principle that besides the look, anything which tends to excite any of the senses, is opposed to the objective for which Allah has forbidden the women to display their adornment. Therefore he ordered the women not to move out with perfumes. According to Ḥadrat Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said: "Do not stop the bondmaids of Allah from coming to the mosques, but they should not come with perfumes." (Abū Da'ūd, Aḥmad). According to another tradition, Ḥadrat Abū Hurairah passed by a woman who was coming out of the mosque and felt that she had perfumed herself. He stopped her and said: "O bondmaid of Allah, are you coming from the mosque?" When she replied in the affirmative, he said: "I have heard my beloved Abul Qāsim (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) say that the prayer of the woman who comes to the mosque with perfumes, is not accepted till she purifies herself with a complete bath as is done after

a sexual intercourse.” (Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, Nasā'ī). Abū Mūsā Ash'arī has quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: “A woman who passes on the way with perfumes so that people may enjoy her perfumes, is such and such: he used very harsh words for her.” (Tirmizī, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī). His instruction was that women should use scents with bright colours but light odours. (Abū Da'ūd).

Similarly the Holy Prophet disapproved that feminine voices should enter the ears of men unnecessarily. In case of genuine need the Qur'ān itself has allowed women to speak to men, and the Holy Prophet's wives themselves used to instruct people in religious matters. But where there is no necessity, nor any moral or religious objective, the women have been discouraged to let their voices be heard by men. Thus if the Imām happens to commit a mistake during a congregational prayer, and he is to be warned of the lapse, the men have been taught to say *Subḥān-Allah* (Glory be to Allah), while the women have been instructed to tap their hands only. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad, Tirmizī, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah).

48. “Turn towards Allah”: Repent of the lapses and errors that you have been committing in this regard so far, and reform your conduct in accordance with the Commands given by Allah and His Prophet.

49. It would be useful to give here a resume of the other reforms which the Holy Prophet introduced in the Islamic society after the revelation of these Commandments.

(1) He prohibited the other men (even if they are relatives) to see a woman in privacy or sit with her in the absence of her *maḥram* relatives. Ḥadrat Jābir bin 'Abdullah has reported that the Holy Prophet said: “Do not visit the women whose husbands are away from home, because Satan circulates in one of you like blood.” (Tirmizī). According to another Tradition from Ḥadrat Jābir, the Holy Prophet said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should never visit a woman when alone unless she has a *maḥram* relative also present, because the third one would be Satan.” (Aḥmad). Imām Aḥmad has quoted another Tradition from 'Āmir bin Rabī'ah to the same effect. The Holy Prophet himself was extremely cautious in this regard. Once when he was accompanying his wife Ḥadrat Ṣafīyyah to her house at night, two men of Anṣār passed by them on the way. The Holy Prophet stopped them and said: “The woman with me is my wife Ṣafīyyah.” They said: “Glory be to Allah! O Messenger of Allah, could there be any suspicion about you?” The Holy Prophet said: “Satan circulates like blood in the human body; I was afraid lest he should put an evil thought in your minds.” (Abū Da'ūd).

(2) The Holy Prophet did not approve that a man's hand should

even touch the body of a non-*maḥram* woman. That is why while administering the oath of allegiance, he would take the hand of the men into his own hand, but he never adopted this procedure in the case of women. Hadrat 'Ā'ishah has stated that the Holy Prophet never touched the body of any other woman. He would administer the oath verbally to them; when this was done, he would say: "You may go, your allegiance is complete." (Abū Da'ūd).

(3) He strictly prohibited the woman from proceeding on a journey alone without a *maḥram* or in company with a non-*maḥram*. A Tradition from Ibn 'Abbās has been quoted in Bukhārī and Muslim saying that the Holy Prophet gave a sermon and said: "No man should visit the other woman when she is alone unless she has a *maḥram* also present, and no woman should travel alone unless accompanied by a *maḥram*." A man stood up and said: "My wife is going for Ḥajj, while I am under orders to join a certain expedition." The Holy Prophet said: "You may go for Ḥajj with your wife." Several other Traditions on the subject, emanating from Ibn 'Umar, Abū Sa'īd Khudrī and Abū Hurairah, are found in authentic books of Traditions, which concur that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day that she should go on a journey without a *maḥram*. There is, however, a variation with regard to the duration and the length of the journey. Some Traditions lay down the minimum limit as 12 miles and some lay down the duration as one day, a day and night, two days or even three days. This variation, however, neither renders the Traditions unauthentic nor makes it necessary that we should accept one version as legally binding in preference to others. For a plausible explanation for the different versions could be that the Holy Prophet gave different instructions at different occasions depending on the circumstances and merit of each case. For instance, a woman going on a three-day journey might have been prohibited from proceeding without a *maḥram*, while another going on a day's journey might also have been similarly prohibited. Here the real thing is not the different instructions to the different people in different situations, but the principle that a woman should not go on a journey without a *maḥram* as laid down in the Tradition quoted above from Ibn 'Abbās.

(4) He not only took practical measures to stop free mixing of the sexes together but prohibited it verbally as well. Everyone knows the great importance of the congregational and the Friday prayers in Islam. The Friday Prayer has been made obligatory by Allah Himself; the importance of the congregational prayer can be judged from a Tradition of the Holy Prophet, which says: "If a person does not attend the mosque without a genuine reason and offers his prayer at home, it will

not be acceptable to Allāh." (Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah, Daraquṭnī, Hākim on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās). But in spite of this, the Holy Prophet exempted the women from compulsory attendance at the Friday Prayer. (Abū Da'ūd, Daraquṭnī, Baihaqī). As for the other congregational prayers, he made the women's attendance optional, saying: "Do not stop them if they want to come to the mosque." Then at the same time, he made the clarification that it was better for them to pray in their houses than in the mosques. According to Ibn 'Umar and Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said: "Do not prohibit the bondmaids of Allah from coming to the mosques of Allah." (Abū Da'ūd). Other Traditions from Ibn 'Umar are to the effect: "Permit the women to come to the mosques at night." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Trimizī, Nasā'ī, Abū Da'ūd). And: "Do not stop your women-folk from coming to the mosques though their houses are better for them than the mosques." (Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd). Umm Ḥumaid Sā'idīyyah states that once she said to the Holy Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, I have a great desire to offer my prayer under your leadership." He replied: "Your offering the prayer in your room is better than your offering it in the verandah, and your offering the prayer in your house is better than your offering it in the neighbouring mosque, and your offering the prayer in the neighbouring mosque is better than offering it in the principal mosque (of the town)." (Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī). A Tradition to the same effect has been reported from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd in Abū Da'ūd. According to Ḥadrat Umm Salamah, the Holy Prophet said: "The best mosques for women are the innermost portions of their houses." (Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī). But when Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah saw the conditions that prevailed in the time of the Umayyads, she said: "If the Holy Prophet had witnessed such conduct of the women, he would certainly have stopped their entry into the mosques as was done in the case of the Israelite women." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd). The Holy Prophet had appointed a separate door in his Mosque for the entry of women, and Ḥadrat 'Umar in his time had given strict orders prohibiting men to use that door. (Abū Da'ūd). In the congregational prayers the women were instructed to stand separately behind the men; at the conclusion of the prayer, the Holy Prophet and his followers used to remain sitting for a while so that the women could leave the mosque before the men. (Aḥmad, Bukhārī). The Holy Prophet would say: "The best row for the men is the front row and the worst the last one (nearest to the women's row); and the best row for the women is the rearmost row and the worst the front one (just behind the men's)." (Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī, Nasā'ī, Aḥmad). The women joined the 'Id congregational prayers but they had a separate enclosure from men. After the sermon the Holy Prophet used to address them separately.

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(Abū Da'ūd, Bukhārī, Muslim). Once outside the Mosque the Holy Prophet saw the men and women moving side by side in the crowd. He stopped the women and said: "It is not proper for you to walk in the middle of the road; walk on the sides." On hearing this the women immediately started walking along the walls. (Abū Da'ūd). All these Commandments clearly show that mixed gatherings of the men and women are wholly alien to the temper of Islam. It cannot therefore be imagined that Divine Law which disallows the men and women to stand side by side for prayers in the sacred houses of Allah, would allow them to mix together freely in colleges, offices, clubs and other gatherings.

(5) He permitted the women to make modest use of the make-ups, even instructed them to do so, but strictly forbade its overdoing. Of the various types of make-up and decoration that were prevalent among the Arab women in those days, he declared the following as accursed and destructive of communities:

(a) To add extra hair to one's own artificially with a view to make them appear longer and thicker.

(b) To tattoo various parts of the body and produce artificial moles.

(c) To pluck hair from the eye-brows to give them a special shape, or to pluck hair from the face to give it a cleaner look.

(d) To rub the teeth to make them sharp, or to produce artificial holes in them.

(e) To rub the face with saffron or other cosmetic to produce an artificial complexion.

These instructions have been reported in *Ṣiḥāḥ Sittā* and in *Musnad Aḥmad* on the authority of *Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, Asmā' bint Abū Bakr, Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās* and *Amīr Mu'āwiyah* through reliable narrators.

After having the knowledge of these clear Commandments from Allah and His Prophet, a Muslim has only two courses open before him. Either he should follow these Commandments practically and purify himself, his family life and the society at large of the moral evils for the eradication of which Allah and His Prophet have given such detailed Commandments, or if due to some weakness he violates one or more of these Commandments, he should at least realize that he is committing a sin, and regard it as such, and should abstain from labelling it as a virtue by misinterpretation. Apart from these alternatives, the people who adopt the Western ways of life against the clear injunctions of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*, and then try their utmost to prove them Islam itself, and openly claim that there is no such thing as *purdah* in Islam, not only commit the sin of disobedience but also display ignorance and

hypocritical obstinacy. Such an attitude can neither be commended by any right thinking person in this world, nor can it merit favour with Allah in the Hereafter. But among the Muslims there exists a section of modern hypocrites who are so advanced in their hypocrisy that they repudiate the Divine injunctions as false and believe those ways of life to be right and based on truth, which they have borrowed from the non-Muslim communities. Such people are not Muslims at all, for if they still be Muslims, the words 'Islam' and 'un-Islam' lose all their meaning and significance. Had they changed their Islamic names and publicly declared their desertion of Islam, we would at least have been convinced of their moral courage. But in spite of their wrong attitudes, these people continue to pose themselves as Muslim. There is perhaps no meaner class of people in the world. People with such character and morality cannot be unexpected to indulge in any forgery, fraud, deception or dishonesty.

50. The word *ayāmā* is the plural of *ayyim* which means a single person, and is applicable to every man who is without a wife and to every woman who is without a husband.

51. That is, those who show the right attitude in their dealings with you and in whom you find the capability of discharging the responsibilities of married life. The owner whose slave does not show the right attitude nor seems to possess the necessary capability and temper to lead a reasonably happy married life, has not been required to arrange his or her marriage. For in that case he would become the cause of ruining another person's life. This condition, however, has not been imposed on free persons because in their case the people who promote marriages are no more than mere advisers, associates and introducers. The actual marriage depends on the mutual willingness of the bride and the bridegroom. In the case of a slave, however, the entire responsibility lies on the owner, and if he makes the mistake of marrying a poor person with an ill-natured, ill-mannered spouse, the responsibility for the consequences will be entirely his.

52. The imperative mood of the verb in "Arrange marriages....the right attitude", has led some scholars to assume that it is obligatory to arrange such marriages; whereas the nature of the problem indicates that it cannot be so. Obviously it cannot be obligatory for somebody to arrange the marriage of the other person. Marriage is not a one-sided affair; it needs another party also. If it were obligatory, what would be the position of the person who is going to be married? Should he willingly accept to be married wherever others arrange it? If so, it would mean that he or she had absolutely no choice in the matter. And if the one has a right to refuse, how are the others going to discharge their responsi-

bility? Taking all these aspects into account the majority of the jurists have held that the Commandment is not obligatory but recommendatory. The intention is that the Muslims should ensure that none in the society should remain unmarried. The people of the house, friends and neighbours, all should take necessary interest in the matter, and where no such help is available, the state should make necessary arrangements.

53. This does not mean that Allah will certainly bestow wealth on anybody who marries. The intention is to discourage a calculative approach. This instruction is both for the parents of the girl and of the boy. The former should not reject a pious and virtuous suitor merely because he happens to be poor. Similarly the boy's parents should not go on postponing his marriage because he is not yet a full earning member or is not yet earning sufficiently. Young men have been advised not to go on postponing their marriage unnecessarily waiting for better times. Even if the income is not yet sufficient, one should marry with full faith in Allah. Very often the marriage itself becomes the cause of improving straitened circumstances. The wife helps to control the family budget, or the husband starts to exert himself more to meet the new challenges and responsibilities. The wife can also earn to supplement the family budget. Then, who knows what the future holds in store for him. Good times can change into bad times and bad into good. One should therefore refrain from being too calculative in this regard.

54. The best commentary on these verses are the Traditions which have been reported from the Holy Prophet in this connection. Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd has related that the Holy Prophet once said: "O young men, whoso among you can afford to marry, he should marry, because this will be a means of restraining the eyes from casting the evil look and of keeping one pure and chaste, and the one who cannot afford, should fast, because fasting helps cool down the passions." (Bukhārī, Muslim). According to Hadrat Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said: "Allah has taken upon Himself to succour three men : (a) the one who marries with a view to guarding his chastity, (b) the slave who works to earn his freedom, and (c) the one who goes out to fight in the way of Allah." (Tirmizī, Naṣā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad). For further explanation, see Sūrah An-Nisā : 25.

55. *Mukātabat* as a term means a deed of emancipation between the owner and the slave entitling the latter to earn his or her freedom after payment of an agreed sum of money in a certain period. This is one of the methods laid down in Islam for the slaves to attain their freedom. It is not essential that the slave must always pay in cash; he can also earn his freedom by rendering some special service to the owner, provided that both the parties agree. Once the agreement is signed, the owner is

not entitled to put any obstacles in the way of the slave's freedom. He will have to provide opportunities to enable him to earn for his emancipation and shall have to free him when the agreed amount has been paid in time. In the time of Ḥadrat 'Umar, a slave entered into such an agreement with his lady owner, but managed to collect the amount in advance of the time limit. When the amount was offered to the lady, she refused to accept it on the ground that she would like to have it in monthly and yearly instalments. The slave complained to Ḥadrat 'Umar who ordered that the amount be deposited in the state treasury and the slave be set free. The lady was informed that her money lay in the treasury and she had the option to take it in a lump sum or in yearly or monthly instalments. (Dāraqūṭnī).

56. A group of jurists have interpreted the words "execute the deed of emancipation with them" to mean that it is obligatory for the owner to accept the offer of a slave to earn his emancipation. This is the view of 'Atā', 'Amr bin Dinār, Ibn Sīrīn, Masrūq, Daḥḥāk, 'Ikrimah, the Zāhiriyyah and Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, and Imām Shāfi'ī also favoured it in the beginning. The other group holds that it is not obligatory but only recommendatory and commendable. This group includes jurists like Sha'bi, Muqātil bin Ḥayyān, Ḥasan Baṣrī, 'Abdul Raḥmān bin Zaid, Sufyān Thaurī, Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik bin Anas and Imām Shāfi'ī later on also had adopted this view. The first view is supported by two things:

(a) The imperative mood of the verb in "execute the deed . . ." suggests that it is a Command from Allah.

(b) Authentic Traditions contain the incident that when Sīrīn, father of Ḥadrat Muḥammad bin Sīrīn, the great jurist and traditionalist, made a request to his master, Ḥadrat Anas, for a deed of emancipation, the latter refused to accept it. Sīrīn took the matter before Ḥadrat 'Umar, who whip in hand turned on Anas, saying : "Allah's Command is that you execute the deed." (Bukhārī). From this it has been argued that it was not a discretionary and personal decision of Ḥadrat 'Umar but it was taken in the presence of the Companions and none expressed any difference of opinion. This therefore should be taken as an authentic interpretation of the verse.

The other group argues that Allah does not merely say : "Execute the deed of emancipation with them", but adds: ". . . provided that you find some good in them." This condition of finding "some good in them" lies entirely on the owner, and there is no fixed standard or means by which the question of "finding good in them" be got adjudicated through a court. Legal injunctions are never couched in such language. As such this injunction can only be regarded as recommendatory and not as legally mandatory. As regards the precedent of the case of Sīrīn, the

jurists say that there was not one slave who asked for a deed of emancipation but thousands of them in the time of the Holy Prophet and the rightly-guided Caliphs, and a large number of them earned their freedom in that way. But apart from Sirīn's there is no case where an owner was forced by a judicial verdict to execute a deed of emancipation. Accordingly this decision of Ḥadrat 'Umar cannot be taken as a judicial decision. All that can be said is that Ḥadrat 'Umar, apart from his position of a judge, was like a father to the Muslims and might have used his paternal authority in a matter where he could not intervene as a judge.

57. "Good" implies three things :

(a) The slave must be capable of earning his emancipation money through hard work and labour. The Holy Prophet has said: "Execute the deed when you are sure that the slave can earn the required amount of money; do not let him go about begging the people for it." (Ibn Kathīr).

(b) He should be honest, truthful and reliable for the purposes of the agreement. He should make the best of the opportunities and should not waste his earnings.

(c) The owner should make sure that the slave has no immoral trends and does not harbour feelings of enmity against Islam or the Muslims, nor should there be any apprehension that his freedom might prove harmful to the interests of the Muslim society. In other words, he should prove to be a loyal and faithful member of the Muslim society and not a fifth columnist. It should be noted that such precautions were absolutely necessary in the case of the prisoners of war taken as slaves.

58. This Command is general and is addressed to the owners, the common Muslims and the Islamic government.

(a) The owner is instructed that he should remit a part of the emancipation money. There are traditions to confirm that the Companions used to remit a sizeable amount of the emancipation money to their slaves. Ḥadrat 'Alī used to remit a quarter of the amount and exhorted others also to do the same. (Ibn Jarīr).

(b) The common Muslim is instructed that he should extend liberal help to all such slaves who asked for help in this regard. One of the heads of *Zakāt* expenditure as laid down in the Qur'ān is "the ransoming of slaves". (IX : 60) In the sight of Allah "freeing of slaves" is a great act of virtue. (XC : 13). According to a Tradition, a Bedouin came to the Holy Prophet and requested him to instruct him what he should do to earn Paradise. The Holy Prophet replied: "You have asked about the most important thing in a most concise way. You should free the slaves and help them to earn their freedom. If you present a head of cattle to somebody, present such a one as gives plenty of milk. Treat

your relatives kindly even if they treat you unjustly. If you cannot do all this, you should feed the poor, give water to the thirsty, exhort the people to do good and forbid them to do evil. If you cannot do even this, you should restrain your tongue : if you have to speak, speak something good, otherwise keep quiet". (Baihaqī).

(c) The Islamic government is advised to spend a part of the *Zakāt* collections on the emancipation of slaves.

Here it should be noted that slaves in the ancient times were of three kinds: (i) Prisoners of war, (ii) Free men who were captured and traded as slaves, (iii) Hereditary slaves who did not know when their ancestors became slaves and to which of the above categories they originally belonged. Before the advent of Islam, Arabia as well as the outside world abounded in all kinds of slaves. The entire social and economic structure of society depended more on slave labour than on servants and wage-earners. The first question before Islam was to tackle the problem of the hereditary slaves, and secondly, to find a solution to the entire problem of slavery for all times to come. In tackling the first problem, Islam did not abruptly abrogate the ownership rights in respect of the hereditary slaves as it would have completely paralysed the entire social and economic system, and involved Arabia in a far more destructive civil war than the one fought in America, leaving the problem where it was as it is in America, where the Negroes are still facing humiliation and disgrace. Islam did not follow any such foolhardy policy of reform. Instead it generated a great moral movement for the emancipation of slaves and employed inducements, persuasions, religious injunctions and legal enactments to educate and motivate the people to free the slaves voluntarily for earning their salvation in the Hereafter, or as expiation of their sins as enjoined by Islam, or by accepting monetary compensation. To set the pace the Holy Prophet himself freed 63 slaves. One of his wives, Hadrat 'Ā'ishah, alone freed 67 slaves. The Holy Prophet's uncle, Hadrat 'Abbās, freed 70 slaves. Among others, Hākīm bin Hizām freed 100 slaves, 'Abdullah bin 'Umar 1,000, Zulkā'la Hīmyarī 8,000, and 'Abdur Rehmān bin 'Auf 30,000. The other Companions among whom Hadrat Abū Bakr and Hadrat 'Uthmān were prominent also set a large number of slaves free. The people, in order to win Allah's favour, not only emancipated their own slaves, but also bought them from others and then set them free. The result was that in so far as hereditary slaves were concerned, almost all of them had been freed even before the righteous Caliphate came to an end.

As for the future, Islam completely prohibited free men from being kidnapped and traded as slaves. As for the prisoners of war, it was permitted (not commanded) that they might be kept as slaves so long as

they were not exchanged for Muslim prisoners of war, or freed on payment of ransom. Then, on the one hand, the slaves were also allowed to earn their freedom through written agreements with their masters, and on the other, the masters were exhorted to set them free just like the hereditary slaves, as an act of virtue, to win Allah's approval, or as expiation of sins, or by willing that a slave would automatically gain his freedom on the master's death, or that a slave girl would be free on the master's death if she had borne him children, whether he had left a will or not. This is how Islam solved the problem of slavery. Ignorant people raise objections without trying to understand this solution, and the apologists offer all sorts of apologies and have even to deny the fact that Islam had prohibited slavery absolutely.

59. This does not mean that if the slave girls do not want to lead a chaste and virtuous life they can be forced into prostitution. It only means this that if a slave girl commits an immoral act of her own free will, she herself is responsible for it and the law will be applied against her alone. But if the owner forces her into it, it will be entirely his responsibility, and the law will proceed against him. Obviously the question of force arises only when someone is compelled to act against his own will. As for the words "for your own worldly gains", these have not been used in a conditional or restrictive sense that if the owner is not sharing the immoral earnings of the slave girl, he is not an offender if he forces her into prostitution. The intention is to declare all such money unlawful as has been earned through illegal and immoral ways.

It is, however, not possible to comprehend the full import of this injunction merely from the words of the text. For this it is necessary to understand the entire background and circumstances prevalent at the time of its revelation. Prostitution in Arabia existed in two forms: Domestic prostitution and open prostitution in the brothel.

(a) 'Domestic' prostitution was carried out by freed slave girls who had no guardians, or by free women who had no family or tribal support. They would take residence in a house and enter into an agreement with a number of men simultaneously for financial help in return for sexual gratification. Whenever a child was born, the mother would name whomsoever she liked as its father and the man was accepted in society as the father of the child. This was an established custom in the pre-Islamic days, which was considered almost analogous to "marriage". When Islam came, it recognised only that contract as legal marriage where a woman had only one husband. Thus all other forms of sexual gratification came to be regarded as adultery and punishable offences as such. (Abū Da'ūd).

(b) Open prostitution which was carried out entirely through slave

girls was of two kinds. First, the slave girls were obliged to pay a fixed heavy amount every month to the owner, which they could only earn through prostitution. The owner knew fully well how the money was earned, and in fact there was no other object of imposing a heavy demand on the poor slave girl, especially when it was much higher than the usual wages for work or labour. Secondly, beautiful and young slave girls were made to stay in the brothel and a flag was put at the door to indicate that a "needy person" could satisfy his lust there. Such women were called "*qalīqiyāt*" and their houses were well known as "*manākhīr*". All prominent men of the day owned and maintained such houses of prostitution. 'Abdullah bin Ubayy (the chief of the hypocrites of Madīnah, who had been nominated as king of Madīnah before the Holy Prophet's arrival there and who was in the forefront of the campaign to slander Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah) himself owned a regular house of prostitution in Madīnah, which had six beautiful slave girls. Not only did he earn money through them but also used them to entertain his respectable and important guests who came to see him from different parts of Arabia. He employed the illegitimate children thus born to enhance the splendour and strength of his army of slaves. When one of these prostitutes, named Mu'āzah, accepted Islam and wanted to offer repentance for her past sins, Ibn Ubayy subjected her to torture. She complained of it to Ḥadrat Abū Bakr, who brought it to the notice of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet ordered that the woman be taken away from the cruel man. (*Ibn Jarīr*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 55-58, and 103-104; *Al-Istī'āb*, Vol. II, p. 762; *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. III, pp. 288-289). Such were the conditions when this verse was revealed. If these conditions are kept in view, it will become obvious that the real object was not merely to stop the slave girls from being forced into prostitution but to ban prostitution itself as illegal within the boundaries of the Islamic state. Simultaneously there was a declaration of general pardon for those who had been forced into this business in the past.

After the revelation of this Divine Command the Holy Prophet declared: "There is no place for prostitution in Islam." (Abū Da'ūd). The second Command that he gave was that the earnings made through adultery were unlawful, impure and absolutely forbidden. According to a tradition reported by Rāf'i bin Khadīj, the Holy Prophet described such earnings as impure, product of the worst profession and most filthy income. (Abū Da'ūd, Tirmizī, Nasā'ī). According to Abū Ḥujāifah, he termed the money earned through prostitution as unlawful. (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad). Abū Mas'ūd 'Uqbah bin 'Amr says that the Holy Prophet forbade the people to take prostitution earnings. (Ṣiḥāḥ Ṣittā and Aḥmad). The third Command was that the slave girl could be

employed for lawful manual labour, but the owner had no right to impose or receive any money from her about which he was not sure how it had been earned. According to Rāf'i bin Khadij, he prohibited accepting any earnings from the slave girl unless it was known how she had earned it. (Abū Da'ūd). Rāf'i bin Rifā'ah Anṣārī has reported the same Command in clearer words. He says : "The Prophet of Allah prohibited us from accepting anything from the earnings of a slave girl except that which she earned through manual labour, such as (and he indicated this with his hand) baking bread, spinning cotton or carding wool or cotton." (Musnad Aḥmad, Abū Da'ūd). Another tradition quoted from Ḥadrat Abū Hurairah in Abū Da'ūd and Musnad Aḥmad says that taking of money earned by a slave girl through unlawful means is prohibited. Thus the Holy Prophet in accordance with the intention of this verse, banned by religious injunction and law all kinds of prostitution prevalent in Arabia in those days. Over and above this, the decision he gave in the case of Mu'āzah, the slave girl of 'Abdullah bin Ubayy, shows that an owner who forces his slave girl into prostitution loses his rights of ownership over her. This is a tradition from Imām Zuhri, which Ibn Kathīr has quoted on the authority of Musnad 'Abdur Razzāq.

60. This verse is not only connected with the verse immediately preceding it but with the entire discourse right from the beginning. "Revelations giving clear guidance" are those verses which : (1) state the law concerning *Zinā*, *Qazf* and *Li'ān*, (2) forbid the believers to marry impure men or women, (3) prohibit the slandering of chaste people and propagating indecencies in society, (4) lay stress on men and women to restrain their gaze and guard their private parts, (5) prescribe the limits of purdah for women, (6) disapprove of the marriageable people's remaining unmarried, (7) lay down the rule for slaves to earn their freedom through written agreements, and (8) ban prostitution to purify society. After all these commands and instructions, a warning is being given : that now if the people violated these instructions it would only mean that they wanted to meet with the same doom as had been the lot of the wretched communities before them, whose stories have been related in the Qur'ān itself. There could probably be no severer warning at the end of an edict. But it is a pity that a people who profess to be believers, and recite the holy edict and hold it sacred, yet continue to defy and violate its provisions in spite of the severe warning.

61. From here the discourse is directed towards the hypocrites, who were bent upon starting mischief in the Islamic community, and were as active from within as the unbelievers were from without to harm the Islamic movement and the body politic of Islam. As these people

professed belief, and apparently belonged to the Muslim community, and had blood relationships with the Muslims, especially with the Anṣār, they were better placed to start and spread mischief. The result was that even some sincere Muslims, due to simplicity or weakness, became tools in their hands and even their supporters. But in spite of their profession of faith, the lure of worldly gains had utterly blinded them to the light that was spreading in the world through the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). The indirect address to the hypocrites here has three things in view : Firstly, to admonish them, for the first and foremost demand of Allah's providence and His mercy is to go on admonishing the misguided and the erring one till the last in spite of his persistence in mischief and wickedness. Secondly, to differentiate clearly between belief and hypocrisy so that every right thinking person from the Muslim community should be able to distinguish between a true believer and a hypocrite. Then if anybody, in spite of this differentiation, falls a prey to the machinations of the hypocrites or supports them, he should himself be responsible for his conduct.

Thirdly, to warn the hypocrites clearly and plainly that Allah's promises for the believers are meant only for those who sincerely believe and then fulfil the demands and requirements of their Faith. These promises are not meant for anybody who poses himself as a Muslim. The hypocrites and the sinful people therefore should not cherish any hope that they will have any share in these.

62. The phrase "heavens and the earth" in the Qur'an is generally used for the "universe". Thus the verse would also mean : "Allah is the light of the whole universe".

Light is something which makes things visible; which is itself manifest and helps make other things manifest. The human mind conceives light in this very sense. Absence of light is termed darkness, invisibility and obscurity. On the other hand, when there is visibility and things become exposed to view, man says there is light. Allah has been called 'Light' in this basic sense, and not in the sense of a beam of light which travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second and stimulates the optic nerve through the retina. This conception of light has nothing to do with the reality of the meaning for which human mind has coined this word; rather the word light is used for all those lights which we experience in this physical world. All human words used for Allah are used in their basic sense and meaning, and not with reference to their physical connotation. For instance, when the word "sight" is used with respect to Allah, it does not mean that Allah has an eye like men and animals with which He sees. Similarly when we say that Allah 'hears' or 'grips' or 'grasps', it does not mean that He hears through ears, or grips or grasps with the hand like us. These words are used in a metaphorical sense and only a man of very poor intelligence would have the misconception that

hearing or seeing or grasping is not possible except in the limited and specific sense in which we experience it. Similarly it will be shortsightedness to interpret the word 'light' in the sense of physical light rays emanating from a luminous body and affecting the retina. This word is not applicable to Allah in its limited sense, but in its absolute sense. That is, He alone in this universe is the real and prime "Cause of manifestation", otherwise there is nothing but darkness here. Everything which gives light and illuminates other things has got its light from Him; it has no light of its own.

The word light is also used for knowledge, and ignorance is termed as darkness. Allah is the Light of the universe in this sense too, because the knowledge of Reality and of right Guidance can be obtained from Him alone; without having recourse to His 'Light', there will be nothing but darkness of ignorance and the resultant vice and wickedness in the world.

63. "Blessed" : yielding multiple benefits.

64. ".... which is neither eastern nor western" : which grows in an open plane or on a hill, where it gets sunshine from morning till evening. Such an olive tree yields fine oil which gives a bright light. On the other hand, a tree which gets sunlight only from the east or only from the west, yields thick oil which gives weak light.

65. In this parable, Allah has been likened to the Lamp and the universe to the Niche. The glass shade is the veil behind which Allah has concealed Himself from His creation. This veil is not a physical veil for concealment, but a veil caused by the intensity of Divine manifestation. The human eye is unable to see Him not because of the intervening darkness but because of the intensity of the all-pervading, all-embracing Light radiating through the transparent veil. The human vision which is limited in nature cannot comprehend it. It can only comprehend and perceive limited physical lights which vary in brightness, which disappear and reappear, and which can be perceived only by contrast to existing darkness. But the 'Absolute Light' has no confronting darkness: it does not vanish, it shines forth and pervades all around with ever-existing glory; it is beyond human perception and comprehension.

As for "the lamp which is lit with the oil of a blessed olive tree, which is neither eastern nor western", this is a metaphor to give an idea of the perfect light of the lamp and its brilliance. In antiquity the source for brilliant light were the olive lamps, and the most superior oil for the purpose was that obtained from a tree standing in an open and elevated place. The epithet of Lamp for Allah in the parable does not mean that Allah is deriving His energy from some external source. It only means that the Lamp of the parable is not an ordinary lamp but the most brilliant lamp that can be imagined. Just as a brilliant lamp illuminates the whole house, so has Allah illuminated the whole universe.

Again, the words "... its oil is (so fine) as if it were going to shine forth by itself though no fire touched it", are also meant to emphasize the brilliance of the light of the lamp, which is being fed by the finest and most readily combustible oil. The 'olive' and 'its being neither eastern nor western', and 'high combustibility of its oil by itself' (without fire), are not the essential elements of the parable, but attributes of the lamp, which is the primary element of the parable. The essential elements of the parable are only three: the Lamp, the Niche and the transparent Glass Shade.

The sentence, "His light may be likened.....", dispels the possible misunderstanding that one could have from the words: "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth." This shows that the use of the word "light" for Allah does not at all mean that the essence of His Being is nothing but 'light'. In essence, He is a Perfect Being, Who is All-Knowing, All-Powerful, All-Wise etc. and also possessing all 'Light'. He has been called 'Light' itself because of His Perfection as a Source of Light, just as somebody may be called 'Grace' on account of his being highly gracious and beneficent and 'Beauty' because of his being highly beautiful and attractive.

66. That is, although Allah's Light is illuminating the whole world, everybody does not and cannot perceive it. It is Allah alone Who blesses whomsoever He wills with the capacity for perceiving His Light and benefiting by it. Just as the day and night are alike to a blind man, so is the case of a man without the gift of inner perception: he may see the electric light, the sunlight, the moonlight and the light from stars, but he cannot perceive the Light of Allah. For him, there is nothing but darkness in the universe. Just as a blind man cannot see the stone in his way unless he stumbles over it, so is the man without the gift of inner perception, who cannot perceive even those realities around him which may be all brilliance and shining by Allah's Light. He will perceive them only when he is overtaken by the consequences of his own misdeeds.

67. This means two things: First, He knows what parable can best explain a certain reality, and secondly, He knows who is entitled to receive this bounty and who is not. Allah has no need to show His Light to the one who has no desire or longing for it and who is utterly lost in worldly pursuits and in seeking material pleasures and gains. This bounty can be bestowed only on the one who in the knowledge of Allah has a sincere desire for it.

68. Some commentators have interpreted these "houses" to mean the mosques, and 'raising them' to mean constructing and reverencing them. Some others, however, take them to mean the houses of the believers and 'raising them' to mean raising their moral status. The words "to mention His name therein" seem to refer to the mosques and support the first interpretation, but if we look deeper, we see that they

support the second interpretation equally well. This is because Divine Law does not confine worship to mosques alone as is the case with the priest-ridden religions where the rituals can only be performed under the leadership of a clergy. In Islam a house is also a place of worship like the mosque and every man is his own priest. As this Sūrah mostly contains instructions for ennobling domestic life, we feel that the second interpretation is more in keeping with the context though there is no reason for rejecting the first interpretation. There will be no harm if both the mosques and the houses of the believers are implied here.

69. Here those characteristics have been described which are necessary for the true perception of Allah's Absolute Light and for benefiting from His bounties. Allah does not bestow His bounties without reason. He bestows them on the deserving ones alone. He only sees this that the recipient has sincere love for Him, stands in awe of Him, seeks His favours and avoids His wrath; he is not lost in material pursuits but in spite of his worldly engagements keeps his heart warm with God's remembrance. Such a person does not rest content with low spiritual levels, but actively endeavours to attain the heights towards which his Master may guide him. He does not go for the paltry gains of this transitory world, but has his gaze constantly fixed on the everlasting life of the Hereafter. These are the things which determine whether or not a person should be granted the favour to benefit from Allah's Light. Then, when Allah is pleased to bestow His bounties, He bestows them without measure; and it will be man's own incapacity if he does not receive them in full.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا
 جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ فَوْقَهُ حِسَابًا ط وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ
 الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥٥﴾ أَوْ كَظُلُمٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ
 فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ طُلُوكًا بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرهَا ط
 وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٥٦﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ
 مَن فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صَفْتٍ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ ط
 وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَاللَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ
 الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٥٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ
 رُكَّامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَافِهِ وَيُنزِلُ مِنْ لَسَاءٍ مِّنْ جِبَالٍ
 فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَن مَّن يَشَاءُ ط يَكَادُ سَنَا
 بَرْقِهِ يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٥٩﴾ يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
 لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
 يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ ط وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ ط وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَمْشِي
 عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ ط يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦١﴾ لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ
 مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا
 بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا
 أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا
 فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾
 أَفِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ أَمْ ارْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ

(On the other hand,) the deeds of those who disbelieved,⁷⁰ may be likened to a mirage in a waterless desert, which the thirsty one took for water; but when he reached there he found nothing to drink; nay, he found there Allah Who settled his full account, and Allah is very swift at reckoning.⁷¹ 39-40

Or (their efforts may be likened to those of a man trying to swim in) a deep dark ocean, covered with billows, one over the other, and above it a cloud: darkness upon darkness: so much so that if he stretches out his hand, he cannot see⁷² it. There is no light for the one whom Allah does not give light.⁷³ 41-42

Do⁷⁴ you not observe that all those who are in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with outspread wings, glorify Allah? Each one knows the mode of its prayer and glorification, and Allah has full knowledge of all they do. The kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone, and all shall have to return to Him.

Do you not observe that Allah makes the cloud move gently: then joins its pieces together: then gathers it into a mass of thick cloud: then you see that rain-drops fall down from its midst: and He sends down hail out of the high up mountains in the heaven:⁷⁵ then He smites with it whom He wills and turns it away from whom He pleases: then a flash of lightning from it dazzles the eyes. He alternates the day and the night: there is indeed a lesson in it for those who have observing eyes. 43-44

And Allah created every creature from a sort of water: 45 of them some one crawls upon its belly: another walks on two legs and still another on four; Allah creates whatever He wills for He has power over everything.

We have sent down Revelations that make the reality 46 quite plain; however, Allah guides to the straight path whomsoever He pleases.

These people say, "We have believed in Allah and the Messenger and we have submitted"; but soon after this, some 47-50 of them turn away (from obedience): such people are not true Believers.⁷⁶ When they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them,⁷⁷ a party of them turns away.⁷⁸ However, if the truth be on their side, they come towards the Messenger in all obedience.⁷⁹ Are

their hearts afflicted with the disease (of hypocrisy)? Or, are they in doubt? Or, do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will be unjust to them? In fact, they themselves are unjust.⁸⁰

70. That is, they refused to accept sincerely the Divine Message which was brought by the Prophets, and which at that time was being given by the Prophet Muḥammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). These verses clearly show that the truthful and righteous believers only can benefit from Allah's Light. In contrast to them, the state of those people is being described here, who refused to believe and obey the Holy Prophet, who was the real and sole means of attaining the Light of Allah.

71. This parable describes the condition of those people who, in spite of disbelief and hypocrisy, practise some good deeds and also believe, among other things, in the life after death, in the hope that their good deeds will be of some help to them in the Hereafter even if they did not believe and follow the Prophet and lacked the qualities of true believers. In this parable they are being told that their expectations of reaping benefits of their ostentatious deeds of virtue in the Hereafter are no more than a mirage. Just as a traveller in the desert takes the glittering sands for a surging pool of water and runs towards it for quenching his thirst, so are these people travelling on the road to death cherishing false hopes on account of their good deeds. But just as the one running towards a mirage does not find anything there to quench his thirst, so will these people find nothing to avail them when they enter the state of death. On the contrary, they will find Allah there, Who will require them to account for their disbelief, hypocrisy and misdeeds, which they committed along with their ostentatious deeds of virtue, and will deal with them in full justice.

72. This parable describes the condition of all the disbelievers and the hypocrites including those who perform good deeds for ostentation. It is being stated that such people are passing their life in a state of absolute and complete ignorance, whether otherwise they are the most learned people in the world and leaders in their respective fields of learning. They are like the man who is lost in complete darkness where no ray of light can reach him. They think that knowledge merely consists in producing atom bombs, hydrogen bombs, supersonic planes and moon rockets, or in attaining excellence in economics and finance and law and philosophy. But they little understand that real knowledge is something entirely different and they have no idea of it. Thus considered they are just ignorant, and an illiterate peasant who has gained some acquaintance of the Divine Truth is wiser than they.

73. Here is stated the real object of the discourse which began with: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth." When in fact there is no light in the universe except the Light of Allah and all manifestation

of reality is due to that Light, wherefrom can the one whom Allah does not give light have light? There exists no other source of light from where he can receive a ray.

74. As has been explained above, Allah is the Light of the whole universe, but His Light can be perceived and comprehended by the righteous believers only. All other people grope about in the dark like the blind in spite of the all-pervading, all-embracing Light. Here a few of the countless signs which guide to the Light are being mentioned by way of example. If a person whose eyes of the heart are open, sees them, he can perceive Allah working everywhere around him at all times. But those who are blind of the heart, and can only see with the head's eyes, can see Biology and Zoology and other sciences working in the world, but they fail to perceive and recognize Allah's signs anywhere working in the world.

75. This may mean frozen clouds which have been called 'mountains in the heavens' metaphorically. It may also mean the mountains of the earth which stand high in the heavens and whose snow-capped peaks cause condensation in the clouds which results in hailstorms.

76. That is, their turning away from obedience itself belies their claim that they are believers and their conduct clearly shows that their profession of faith and submission was absolutely false.

77. These words clearly state that the judgement of the Prophet is the judgement of Allah and the Command of the Prophet is the Command of Allah. Therefore, the invitation to obey the Prophet is an invitation to obey both Allah and His Prophet. (Also see An-Nisā : 59-61, and the E.N.'s thereof).

78. This does not only apply to the cases which came up before the Holy Prophet for a decision in his lifetime, but this continues valid even today. Thus, a summons from the court of a judge in an Islamic government, who judges a case in accordance with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, is actually a summons from the Court of Allah and His Prophet, and the one who repudiates the judge indeed repudiates both Allah and His Prophet. This thing has been explained in a tradition related by Ḥasan Basrī thus : "Whosoever is summoned to appear before a judge from among the judges of the Muslims but fails to appear before him, he is a transgressor and forfeits his rights." (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān*, Vol. III, p. 405). In other words, such a person not only renders himself punishable but also guilty and liable to be proceeded against.

79. This verse states that a person who willingly accepts only that part of the Divine Law which serves his advantage, but rejects that which goes against his interests and desires, and prefers the worldly laws instead, is not a believer but a hypocrite. His profession of Faith is false for he does not in fact believe in Allah and His Prophet but in his own interests and desires. With this attitude even if he believes in and follows a

[Contd. on p. 158

رَسُولُهُ بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَإِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا
 إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۗ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
 الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشِ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
 الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ قُلُوبُهُمْ
 نَقِسُوا طَاعَةَ مَعْرُوفَةٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ
 أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ۗ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ ۗ وَإِن
 تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا ۗ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ
 الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَيَسْكُنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينُهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ
 مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۗ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ
 ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاطِيعُوا
 الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ
 وَمَا لَهُمُ النَّارُ وَلَيْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١١٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ
 مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ۖ مِنْ قَبْلِ
 صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهْرِ ۖ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ
 الْعِشَاءِ ۗ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَ هُنَّ طُوفُونَ
 عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾
 وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمْ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
 كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

النِّسَاءِ
 ١٠٦
 ١٠٧
 ١٠٨
 ١٠٩
 ١١٠
 ١١١
 ١١٢
 ١١٣
 ١١٤
 ١١٥

As regards the Believers, when they are called towards Allah and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them, they say, "We have heard and obeyed"; such are the people who attain true success, and only those attain true success who obey Allah and His Messenger and fear Allah and refrain from His disobedience. 51-52

They (the hypocrites) solemnly swear by Allah and say, "If you order us, we will leave our homes." Say to them, "Do not swear oaths for your 'obedience' is well known;⁸¹ Allah is fully aware of what you are doing."⁸² Say, "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, you should note it well that the Messenger is responsible for the duty entrusted to him and you are responsible for the duty entrusted to you. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided, for the responsibility of the Messenger is only to convey the Message clearly to you." 53-4

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will make them successors in the land just as He made those who passed away before them, and that He will establish their religion, which He has approved for them, on strong foundations and will change their (present) state of fear into peace and security. Let them worship Me and associate none with Me;⁸³ and the one who disbelieves after this,⁸⁴ shall be of those who are perverse transgressors. Therefore, establish *Ṣalāt*, pay the *Zakāt* dues and obey the Messenger; it is expected that you will be shown mercy. Do not think about those who have disbelieved that they will be able to frustrate Allah in the land; their abode is Hell and it is a very evil abode. 55-57

O Believers,⁸⁵ your slaves⁸⁶ and those of your children, who have not yet become sex conscious,⁸⁷ must ask your permission before coming in to see you on three occasions: before the Fajr Prayer and at noon when you put off your clothes and after the 'Ishā' Prayer. These are your three times of privacy.⁸⁸ There is no sin for you or for them⁸⁹ if they come without permission at other times than these, for you have to visit one another over and over again.⁹⁰ In this way Allah makes His Commandments clear to you for He is All- 58-59

Knowing, All-Wise. And when your children have grown sex conscious,⁹¹ they should receive your permission for this just as their elders get permission. In this way Allah makes His Revelations plain to you for He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

portion of the Divine Law, his belief has no value whatever in the sight of Allah.

80. That is, there can be only three reasons for such a conduct. First, a person may not have believed at all but may only be posing as a Muslim in order to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the Muslim community. Secondly, he might have believed but may still be having doubts about the reality of the Prophethood, Revelations, life-after-death, and even the existence of Allah Himself. Thirdly, he may be a believer but might at the same time be apprehending injustice from Allah and His Prophet and considering their Commands disadvantageous to him personally in one way or the other. There can be no doubt that the people belonging to any of these categories are themselves unjust. A person who, having such doubts and suspicions, enters the Muslim community and enjoys undeserved benefits posing himself as a member thereof, is indeed a deceiver, cheat and forger. He is not only doing injustice to himself, practising constant falsehood and developing the meanest traits of character, but he is being unjust to the Muslim people as well, who look upon him as one of themselves merely on the basis of his verbal profession of the Faith and let him enjoy all sorts of social, cultural, political and moral relations with them as such.

81. The verse may also mean that the obedience expected of the believers is of recognised and well known type, which is above every kind of suspicion, and not such as may need swearing of oaths to convince others of its sincerity. Their conduct is manifest and everybody who comes into contact with them feels that they are truly obedient to Allah and His Prophet.

82. That is, "You might succeed in deceiving the people, but you cannot deceive Allah, Who is aware of everything, open or hidden, even of your innermost motives and intentions."

83. As has been hinted in the beginning of this discourse, this means to warn the hypocrites that the promise of Allah to bestow successorship in the land is not meant for those people who are Muslims only in name, but for those who are true in faith, pious in character, sincere in devotion and who follow Allah's religion in letter and spirit eschewing every tinge of *shirk*. Those who lack these qualities and pay mere lip service to Islam are neither worthy of this promise nor its addressees. Therefore they should entertain no hope of having any share in it.

Some people interpret *Khilāfat* (successorship in the land) to mean political power and authority, and conversely conclude that whosoever possesses power and authority in the land is necessarily a true believer

and a follower of Allah's approved religion and His devotee, free from all traces of *shirk*. Then in order to get support for their wrong conclusion, they even change the very meanings of Faith, virtue, Divine Creed, Allah's worship, idolatry, etc. to suit their interpretation. This is the worst distortion of the meaning of the Qur'ān, even worse than what the Jews and Christians did with their Scriptures. This interpretation of the verse tends to destroy the very message of the Qur'ān. If 'successorship in the land' were to mean mere power and authority in the land, then all those people who wielded power and authority in the world, or wield it today, would fit in with the description contained in the verse, even if they denied Allah, Revelations, Prophethood, life in the Hereafter, and were involved in all kinds of major sins like usury, adultery, drinking and gambling. Now if all such people are regarded as pious believers and considered worthy of holding the high offices because of their qualities as such, then 'Faith' would imply simple obedience to physical laws and 'Virtue' would mean making use of those laws effectively and successfully. Allah's approved religion would mean making maximum progress in the fields of industry and trade, commerce and politics by achieving excellence in the physical sciences; devotion to Allah would mean abiding by the rules and procedures which are naturally useful and essential for success in individual and collective enterprises; and *shirk* would mean adopting a few harmful methods also along with the useful procedures and rules. But the question is: Would a person who has studied the Qur'ān with an open heart and mind ever believe that the terms 'Faith', 'Righteous deeds', 'True Religion', 'Devotion to Allah', *Tauhid* and *Shirk* as used in the Qur'ān really mean this? As a matter of fact, such a meaning can be understood either by the one who has never made an intelligent study of the Qur'ān as a whole, but has picked up verses from here and there and given them his own biased meaning according to pre-conceived notions and theories, or by the one who has read the Qur'ān through but has all along been holding all those verses as wrong and absurd, which invite people to accept Allah as the One and only Lord, His Revelations as the only source of Guidance, His Messengers as the only true Guides worthy of absolute obedience, and which demand not only belief in the life-after-death, but also state that the people who would consider success in the worldly life as their sole and ultimate objective, without any idea of their accountability in the Hereafter, would be deprived of real success. The Qur'ān has repeated these themes so frequently in diverse ways and in such clear and plain language that it is difficult to believe that anybody who studies it honestly can ever be involved in those misunderstandings in which the modern interpreters of this verse have been involved. The fact is that they have misconstrued *Khilāfat* and *Istikhlaḥ* (successorship) after their own notions, which cannot be held as correct by anybody who has some knowledge of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān has used *Khilāfat* and *Istikhilāf* in the following three meanings and the context determines in which particular meaning it has been used in a particular place :

(a) "To bear the authority delegated by Allah". The whole human race is Allah's *Khalifah* (successor) on the earth in this sense.

(b) "To acknowledge Allah as the Supreme Sovereign and to use His delegated powers and authority in accordance with His Law." In this sense only a pious and righteous believer can be a *Khalifah*, because he alone can discharge the responsibilities of *Khilāfat* truly. On the other hand, a disbeliever and sinner cannot be *Khalifah*: he is rather a rebel against Allah, because he abuses the power and authority delegated by Allah in disobedience to Him in the land bestowed by Him.

(c) "The succession of one ruling nation in the land after the fall of another nation." The meanings (a) and (b) imply vicegerency while (c) implies successorship. Both these meanings of *Khilāfat* are well known and recognised in the Arabic lexicon.

Now anybody who reads this verse in this context cannot have any doubt that the word *Khilāfat* has been used here for the government which discharges the responsibilities of Allah's Vicegerency strictly in accordance with Allah's Law, and not in accordance with mere physical laws of the world. That is why, not to speak of the disbelievers, even the hypocrites, who professed faith in Islam, are being excluded from the purview of Allah's promise. That is why it is being stated that true and righteous believers only are worthy of this promise. That is why it is being averred that the establishment of *Khilāfat* will result in the establishment of Islam, Allah's approved religion, on strong foundations ; and that is why the condition being put forward for earning this favour is that the believers should remain steadfast in their faith and devotion to Allah avoiding every tinge of *shirk*. To remove this promise from its right context and apply it on the international scene to the case of America and Russia, or any other power that be, is sheer absurdity and nonsense. (For further details, see E. N. 99 of Al-Anbiyā' also).

Another thing that needs to be mentioned here is that the direct addressees of this promise were the Muslims living in the time of the Holy Prophet though indirectly it applies to the future generations of Muslims as well. When in the beginning this promise was held out by Allah, the Muslims were living in a state of fear and Islam had not yet taken firm roots even in Ḥejāz. A few years later this state of fear not only gave way to peace and equanimity but Islam also spread outside Arabia to large parts of Africa and Asia, and it became firmly established not only in its own land of birth but outside it as well. This is a historical proof of the fact that Allah fulfilled His promise in the times of Ḥadrat Abū

Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with them all). No right thinking person, therefore, can have any doubt that the *Khilāfat* of the first three Caliphs has been authenticated by the Qur'ān itself and Allah Himself has testified to their being pious Believers. If anybody still has a doubt, he should read the address of Ḥadrat 'Ali in *Nahjul Balāghah*, which was meant to dissuade Ḥadrat 'Umar from going personally to fight against the Iranians. He said :

“Our success in this work is not dependent on numerical strength; it is the religion of Allah for which He Himself has opened ways. We are grateful to Him for His help and succour which has enabled us to serve its cause till it has been raised to its present glory. Allah Himself has said: ‘Allah has promised to those among you, who believe and do righteous deeds that He will make them successors in the land’ Allah will certainly fulfil this promise and will help the armies of Islam. The position of the Caliph in Islam is like that of the string in a necklace of pearls. If the string breaks, the pearls scatter away and the order is destroyed. Once scattered and dispersed, it becomes difficult to collect them again. No doubt the Arabs are small in number, but they have been increased by Islam and strengthened by unity. You should therefore stick to Madīnah like the pivot and make the grindstone of Arabia rotate about you and guide the war-machine from here. Once you leave this place, your entire organisation will begin to crumble ; then you will start feeling more worried about the dangers behind than the enemies in front. Moreover, the Iranians will concentrate their whole attention on you, and will like to exterminate you, taking you as the main and only hurdle in their way to victory. As for your apprehension that they have come out in much greater strength, I would say that hitherto we have been fighting them not merely on the strength of numbers, but have been putting them to rout on the strength of Allah’s help and succour.”

Any discerning reader can see for himself as to which side is being held by Ḥadrat 'Ali as worthy of Allah’s promise with regard to successorship in the land.

84. *Kufr* (disbelief) here may also mean ingratitude or denial of the truth. In the first case, the verse will refer to those people who deviate from the right path after Allah has favoured them with successorship, and in the second, to the hypocrites, who do not give up their hypocritical attitude even after hearing this promise of Allah.

85. From here again, the Commandments for social life are being resumed. It is just possible that this portion of Sūrah An-Nūr was sent down at a later date.

86. According to the majority of commentators and jurists, this refers to both male and female slaves. Ibn 'Umar and Mujāhid, however,

have expressed the opinion that it refers to the male slaves only. But in view of the Commandment that follows there appears to be no reason for making this distinction. Violation of one's privacy by one's children is as undesirable as by one's female slaves. All jurists are agreed that the Commandment given in this verse is applicable both to the minor and to the grown up slaves.

87. Another translation can be : "who have not yet reached the age of seeing wet dreams." From this the jurists have deduced the principle that in case of boys puberty starts when they begin having nocturnal emissions. But the translation that we have adopted is preferable because the injunction is meant both for boys and for girls. If nocturnal emission is taken as the sign of attaining puberty, the injunction would be confined to boys only, because in the case of girls it is the menstrual discharge, and not nocturnal emission, which marks the beginning of puberty. In our opinion the intention is that the children of the house should follow this procedure till the time that they become sex conscious. After they have become sex conscious they have to follow the injunction that follows.

88. Literally, '*aurat* is a place of danger and trouble ; it also means a private part of the body, which one would not like to expose before others, and something which is not fully secured. All these meanings are close to each other and all are implied in the meaning of this verse. The verse means to say that these are your times of privacy when you are either alone or with your wives in a state when it is not proper for your children and servants to come in to see you unannounced. Therefore, they should be instructed that they must take your permission before coming in to see you in your places of privacy at these three times.

89. That is, at other times than these, there is no restriction on the entry of minor children and slaves in your private rooms without permission. If on such an occasion you are not properly dressed and they enter without permission, you will have no right to take them to task. For in that case, it will be your own folly to have kept yourself in an improper state at a time when you should have been properly dressed for the day's business. However, if they enter without permission during the times of privacy, the blame will lie with them provided they have been taught the necessary etiquette.

90. This is the reason for the general permission for children and slaves to come without permission at other times than those mentioned above. This throws light on a fundamental *Fiqh* principle that every religious injunction is based on some wisdom or good reason, whether it has been explained or not.

91. That is, when they have reached the age of puberty. As has been explained in E.N. 87 above, the signs of puberty in the case of boys and girls are nocturnal emission and menstrual discharge respectively. There

is, however, a difference of opinion among the jurists regarding the beginning of puberty in those boys and girls who for some reason do not show these physical signs for an unduly long time. According to Imām Shāfi'ī, Imām Abū Yūsuf, Imām Muḥammad and Imām Aḥmad, a boy or a girl of 15 years will be considered to have attained puberty, and a saying of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah also supports this view. But the well-known view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah is that in such cases the age of puberty will be 17 years for girls and 18 years for boys. Both these opinions are the result of juristic reasoning and neither is based on any injunction of the Qur'ān or Sunnah. It is therefore not necessary that the age limits of 15 or 18 years be accepted as marking the beginning of puberty everywhere in the world in abnormal cases. In different countries and ages there are different conditions of physical development and growth. The age of puberty in a certain country can be determined by means of the law of averages in normal cases. As for abnormal cases, the mean difference of ages may be added to the upper age limit to determine the age of puberty. For instance, if in a country, the minimum and maximum ages for nocturnal discharge are normally 12 and 15 years respectively, the mean difference of one and a half years may be added to the maximum limit of 15 years to determine the beginning of puberty for abnormal cases. The same principle can be used by the legal experts of various countries to fix the age of puberty keeping in view their peculiar local conditions.

There is a tradition quoted from Ibn 'Umar in support of the age of 15 years for puberty. He says: "I was 14, when I presented myself before the Holy Prophet to ask his permission to join the Battle of Uḥud, but he declined permission. Then on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench, when I was 15, I was again presented and he permitted me to join." (Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta, Musnad Aḥmad). This tradition, however, does not stand scrutiny for the following two reasons:

(a) The Battle of Uḥud took place in Shawwāl, 3 A.H., and the Battle of the Trench in Shawwāl, 5 A.H. according to Ibn Ishāq, and in Zil-Qa'd, 5 A.H. according to Ibn Sa'd. There is an interval of two years or more between the two events. Now if Ibn 'Umar was 14 at the time of the Battle of Uḥud, he could not be 15 at the time of the Battle of the Trench. It may be that he mentioned 14 years for 13 years and 11 months and 15 years for 15 years and 11 months.

(b) It is a different thing to be regarded as an adult for the purposes of war and quite different to be legally adult for social affairs. They are not necessarily interconnected. Therefore the correct view is that the age of 15 for an abnormal boy has been fixed on the basis of analogous and juristic reasoning and not on the basis of anything in the Qur'ān or Sunnah.

الَّتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ
 مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ لَيْسَ
 عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا
 عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ
 بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ
 بُيُوتِ أَخَوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ لَيْسَ
 عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى
 أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبْرَكَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا
 مَعَهُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّى يَسْتَأْذِنُوا ۗ إِنِ الَّذِينَ يُسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ
 أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِذَا اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذَنْ
 لِمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ
 الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ۗ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لِيُؤَاذِنُوا
 فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
 أَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ إِلَّا أَنْ يُلَاقِيَ اللَّهَ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۗ وَيَوْمَ
 يُرْجَوْنَ إِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾

There is no sin for such elderly women as are past the age of marriage,⁹² if they lay aside their outer garments⁹³ provided that they do not mean to display their adornment.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, if they behave modestly, it would be better for them: for Allah hears everything and knows everything. 60

There is no harm if a blind or a lame or a sick person (takes a meal at another's house): nor is there any harm for yourselves if you take meals at your own houses or at the houses of your fathers and grandfathers or at the houses of your mothers and grandmothers or at your brothers' houses or at your sisters' houses or at the houses of your paternal uncles or at the houses of your paternal aunts or at the houses of your maternal uncles or at the houses of your maternal aunts or from the houses whose keys are in your possession or at the houses of your friends.⁹⁵ There is no harm if you take your meals together or separately;⁹⁶ however, when you enter the houses, you should send greetings of peace on your people, for the prayer of greetings prescribed by Allah is blessed and pure. Thus Allah makes His Revelations clear to you. It is expected that you will use your common sense to grasp these. 61

True Believers⁹⁷ are those who sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger and who do not leave him without permission when they are with the Messenger for some common good;⁹⁸ only those who ask your permission sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, when they ask your permission for a private business,⁹⁹ you may give permission to whomever you like,¹⁰⁰ and ask Allah's forgiveness for such people:¹⁰¹ Allah is indeed Forgiving and Merciful. 62

O Believers, do not consider the summoning by the Messenger like the summoning among you by one another.¹⁰² Allah knows well those of you who steal away, concealing themselves behind others.¹⁰³ Let those who disobey the order of the Messenger beware lest they should be involved in some affliction,¹⁰⁴ or are visited by a woeful scourge. Beware! whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. He knows whatever you are doing. On the Day you shall 63-64

return to Him, He will let you know what you have done: He has full knowledge of everything.

92. Literally, "the seated women". This means those women who are no longer capable of bearing children, who no longer cherish sexual desires, and who cannot excite the passions of men.

93. Literally, "if they lay aside their clothes". Obviously it cannot mean that they should strip themselves naked. That is why all the jurists and commentators are agreed that it implies the outer garments which are used to hide the adornments as enjoined in Al-Aḥzāb : 59.

94. "*Tabarruj*" is display and exhibitionism. When used with regard to a woman, it would imply the one who displays her charms and adornments before other men. The permission to lay aside the outer garments is being given to those old women who are no longer interested in personal embellishments and whose sex desires are gone. But if they still have a hidden desire smouldering in their hearts and an urge to display, they cannot avail of this permission.

95. Three things are necessary to understand this verse :

(a) The verse consists of two parts : the first part relates to the sick, the lame, the blind and other handicapped people, and the second part to the other people.

(b) The moral teachings of the Qur'ān had so thoroughly changed the Arab mind that they had become highly sensitive with regard to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful. According to Ibn 'Abbās, when Allah commanded them "not to devour one another's property by unlawful ways" (IV : 29), the people became unduly cautious and would not eat freely at each other's house ; so much so that unless a formal invitation was extended, they considered it unlawful even to dine in the house of a relative or a friend.

(c) The mention of "taking meals at your own houses" only means to impress that taking meals at the house of a relative or a friend is just like taking meals at one's own house, where no permission is required.

With these three things in mind, one can easily understand the meaning of the verse. It says that the handicapped person can have his meal anywhere and at any house in order to satisfy his hunger, because the society as a whole owes to him this privilege on account of his handicap. As for the other people, for them their 'own houses' and the houses of the relatives mentioned in the verse are equally good for the purpose. No formal invitation or permission is needed to have the meals at their houses. In the absence of the master, if his wife or children offer something, it can be taken without hesitation. In this connection,

it should be noted that the houses of one's children are just like one's own house, and the friends imply close friends.

96. In ancient Arabia, some tribes had the tradition that each member sat and ate separately. Eating together in one place was considered bad as the Hindus do even today. On the contrary, some other tribes considered it bad to eat alone individually: so much so that they would even go without food if they did not have company at meals. This verse means to abolish such customs and restrictions.

97. These are the final instructions being given to tighten the discipline of the Muslim Community and make it more organised than before.

98. This Commandment is also applicable in respect of the successors of the Holy Prophet after him and other leaders of the Muslims. When the Muslims are called upon to get together for a common cause, whether relating to war or peace, it is not permissible for them to retreat or disperse without due permission of the leader.

99. This contains a warning that it is absolutely unlawful to ask permission without any genuine need.

100. That is, it depends upon the Prophet or his successor after him to grant or not to grant permission even in case of a genuine need. If he deems the collective cause to be more important than the individual need of the person, he may refuse permission, and a believer will not mind it.

101. This again contains a warning: If in asking permission there is even a tinge of excuse making, or of placing individual interests above collective interests, it would be a sin. Therefore the Prophet or his successor should also pray for the forgiveness of the one whom he gives permission.

102 *Duā'* means 'to summon', 'to pray' and 'to call'. *Duā'-ar-Rasūl*, therefore, may mean 'summoning or praying by the Messenger' or 'calling the Messenger'. The verse can thus have three meanings which would all be equally correct :

(a) "The Prophet's summons should not be treated as a common man's summons", for the Prophet's summons is of extraordinary importance, which you cannot ignore, because if you fail to respond to it, or feel hesitant about it, you will be doing so at the very risk of your faith

(b) "Do not consider the Prophet's prayer as a common man's prayer". If he is pleased with you and prays for you, there can be no greater good fortune for you. But if he is displeased with you and curses you, there can be no greater misfortune for you.

(c) "Calling the Prophet should not be like calling among yourselves of each other." That is, you should not call or address the Prophet just as you call and address other people aloud by their

names. You should have full respect for him, because the slightest disrespect in this regard will call for Allah's reckoning in the Hereafter.

Though all the three meanings quite fit in with the context, the first meaning is more in keeping with the theme which follows.

103. This is yet another trait of the hypocrites. When they are summoned to gather together for a collective cause, they do respond to the call, because they want to be counted among the Muslims. But they grudge their presence, and steal away somehow as soon as they find an opportunity.

104. According to Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq, "affliction" means "rule of the unjust". That is, if the Muslims will disobey the Commands of the Prophet, they will be put under tyrants. Besides this, there can be many other forms of affliction also; for instance, sectarian differences, civil war, moral degradation, disruption of community life, internal chaos, disintegration of political and material power, subjugation by others, etc.

XXV

AL-FURQĀN الفرقان

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

XXV

AL-FURQĀN ٱلْفُرْقَان

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name "Al-Furqān" from the first verse. Though it is symbolic like the names of many other Sūrahs, it has a close relation to its subject-matter.

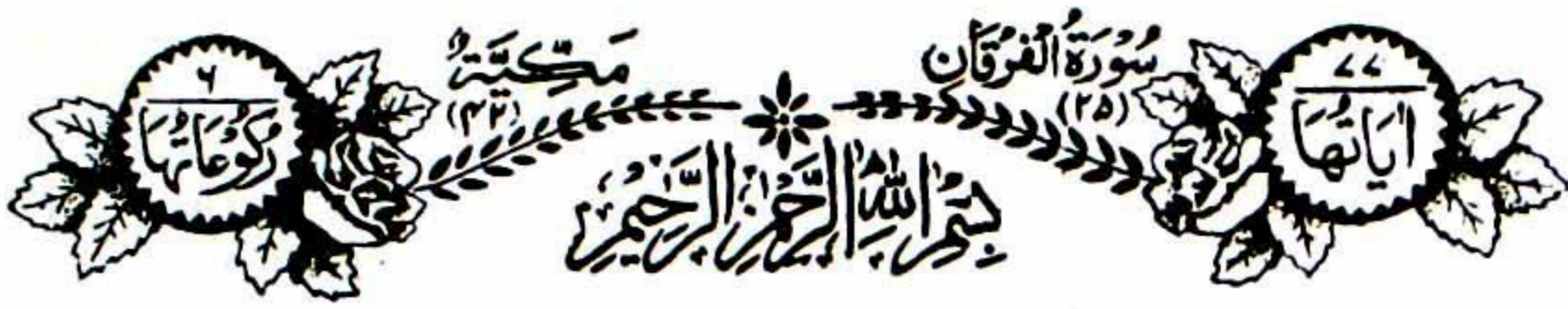
Period of Revelation

It appears from its style and subject-matter that, like Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn, it was also revealed during the third stage of Prophethood at Makkah. Ibn Jarīr and Imām Rāzī have cited a tradition of Daḥḥāk bin Muzāḥim that this Sūrah was revealed eight years before Sūrah An-Nisā. This also confirms our opinion as to its period of revelation. (*Ibn Jarīr*, Vol. XIX, pp. 28-30, and *Tafsīr Kabīr*, Vol. VI, p. 358).

Subject-Matter and Topics

The Sūrah deals with the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Qur'ān, the Prophethood of Muḥammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and his teachings by the disbelievers of Makkah. Appropriate answers to each and every objection have been given and the people have been warned of the consequences of rejecting the Truth. At the end of the Sūrah, a clear picture of the moral superiority of the Believers has been depicted as in the beginning of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn, as if to say, "Here is the criterion for distinguishing the genuine

from the counterfeit. This is the noble character of those people who have believed in and followed the teachings of the Holy Prophet and this is the kind of people that he is trying to train. You may yourselves compare and contrast this type of people with those Arabs, who have not as yet accepted the Message, and who are upholding "ignorance" and exerting their utmost to defeat the Truth. Now you may judge for yourselves as to which you would like to choose." Though this question was not posed in so many words, it was placed before every one in Arabia in a tangible shape. It may be noted that during the next few years, the practical answer given to this question by the whole nation, with the exception of a small minority, was that they chose Islam.



تَبْرَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ۗ الَّذِي

XXV

AL-FURQĀN ٱلْفُرْقَان

Verses : 77

Revealed at Makkah

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

Highly blessed¹ is He, Who has sent down *Al-Furqān*^{2,3} 1
to His servant so that it may be a warner to all mankind:⁴

1. The Arabic word *tabāraka* is very comprehensive, and cannot be understood fully and completely by "highly blessed", not even by a sentence. However, its meanings may be grasped by keeping in view the remaining portion of vv. 1-2. Here it has been used to convey the following meanings:

(1) He is the most Beneficent : that is why He has bestowed the great blessing of *Al-Furqān* by degrees on His servant so that he may admonish all mankind.

(2) He is the most Exalted and Great: for the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to Him.

(3) He is the most Holy, Pure and Perfect: He is free from every tinge of *shirk* and has neither a partner in His Godhead, nor needs a son to succeed Him; for He is Ever-Lasting.

(4) He is the Highest and the Most Supreme in rank : the Kingdom and the Dominion wholly and solely belong to Him, and there is none who has any share in His Authority and Powers.

(5) He is the sole Creator of the universe and has created each and everything in it and predetermined its destiny. For further details, see E.N. 14 of *Al-Mu'minūn* and E.N. 19 of *Al-Furqān*.

2. *Al-Furqān*: The Criterion. The Qur'ān has been called *Al-Furqān* because it is the Criterion for judging right and wrong, virtue

[Contd. on p. 176]

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَ أَمْ يَتَّخِذُ وَلَدًا وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي
 الْمُلْكِ وَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا ۝ وَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَا
 يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَ هُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا وَ لَا نَفْعًا وَ
 لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَ لَا حَيَاةً وَ لَا نُشُورًا ۝ وَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا
 إِلَّا إِفْكٌ افْتَرَاهُ وَ أَعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ آخَرُونَ ۝ فَقَدْ جَاءُوا ظُلْمًا وَ زُورًا ۝
 وَ قَالُوا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝ اكِتَبْنَا فِيهَا تَمَثَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِ بِكُورَةٍ وَ أَصِيلًا ۝ قُلْ
 أَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ۝
 وَ قَالُوا مَا لِي هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَ يَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ
 إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا ۝ أَوْ يُلْقَى إِلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ
 يَأْكُلُ مِنْهَا ۝ وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا ۝ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ
 ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ۝ تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي إِنْ شَاءَ
 جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِمَّنْ ذَلِكَ جَنَّتِ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَ يَجْعَلُ لَكَ
 قُصُورًا ۝ بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالسَّاعَةِ ۝ وَ أَعْتَدْنَا لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا ۝
 إِذَا رَأَتْهُمْ مِنْ مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ سَمِعُوا لَهَا تَغِيظًا وَ زَفِيرًا ۝ وَ إِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا
 مَكَانًا ضَمِيمًا مُتَقَرِّبِينَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُورًا ۝ لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُورًا وَاحِدًا
 وَ ادْعُوا ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا ۝ قُلْ أَذَلِكْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ
 كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَ مَصِيرًا ۝ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ ۝ كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ
 وَعْدًا مَسْئُولًا ۝ وَ يَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَ مَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ ءَأَنْتُمْ
 أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ۝ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي

———He to Whom belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth:⁵ Who has begotten no son:⁶ Who has no partner in His Sovereignty:⁷ Who created each and everything and then ordained its destiny.⁸ Yet the people have set up, besides Him, deities, who do not create anything but are themselves created:⁹ who can neither harm nor help even themselves: who have no power over life or death, nor can they raise up the dead.¹⁰ 2-3

Those who have rejected the Message of the Prophet, say, "This (*Al-Furqān*) is a forgery which this man himself has devised, and some others have helped him at it." What a cruel injustice¹¹ and an impudent lie! They say, "These things are the writings of the ancients which he has got copied down for himself, and then these are recited to him in the morning and evening." O Muḥammad, say to them, "This has been sent down by Him, Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth."¹² The fact is that He is very Forgiving and Merciful.¹³ 4-6

They say, "What sort of a Messenger is he that he eats food and moves about in the streets?¹⁴ Why has not an angel been sent down to accompany him and threaten (the disbelievers)?¹⁵ Or why has not at least a treasure been sent down for him or a garden given to him for (easy) sustenance?"¹⁶ And the wicked people say, "You are following a man bewitched."¹⁷ Just see what strange arguments they bring forward with regard to you! They have gone so far astray that they cannot charge any thing against you.¹⁸ Highly blessed¹⁹ is He, Who, if He wills, could give you much more and better things than what they propose for you: (Not one but) many gardens, beneath which rivers flow; and big castles. 7-10

The fact of the matter is that these people have denied "the Hour".²⁰ ²¹—And for the one who denies the coming of the Hour, We have prepared a blazing Fire. When it will see²² them from afar, they will hear the sounds of its raging and roaring. And when they are chained together and flung into a narrow space therein, they will begin to 11-14

call for death. (Then it will be said to them:) "Do not call for one death today, but call for many deaths."

15-16

Ask them, "Is this (Fire) better or the everlasting Garden, which has been promised to the God-fearing, righteous people?" which will be the recompense of their good deeds and the final destination of their journey, wherein they will get everything they desire, and wherein they will dwell for ever. This is a promise which your Lord has taken upon Himself to fulfil.²³

17

And on that Day (your Lord) will gather all these people together as well as their deities,²⁴ whom they worship besides Allah. Then He will ask them, "Did you mislead these servants of Mine, or did they themselves go astray?"²⁵

[Contd. from p. 173]

and vice, truth and falsehood.

3. The word *nazzala* implies revelation of the Qur'ān piecemeal by degrees. The wisdom of this introductory remark will be explained in the study of verse 32, where the objection of the disbelievers of Makkah—as to why the Qur'ān has not been sent down all at once—has been dealt with.

4. "... warner to all mankind": To warn all mankind of the evil consequences of their heedlessness and deviation. The warner may be Al-Furqān or the Holy Prophet to whom it was revealed. In fact, both were the warners because they were both sent for one and the same purpose. The message of the Qur'ān and Prophethood of Muḥammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) were not meant for any particular country but for the whole world; and not for their own time, but for all times to come. This has been stated at several places in the Qur'ān; for instance: "O Muḥammad, say, 'O mankind, I am a Messenger to all of you from Allah ...'" (Al-A'rāf: 158); "... and this Qur'ān has been revealed to me so that I should thereby warn you all and whom it may reach." (Al-An'ām: 19); "We have sent you only as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind." (Sabbā: 28); and "We have sent you as a mercy to all mankind." (Al-Anbiyā': 107). The Holy Prophet himself has stated this clearly in the Hadīth; for instance, he said: "I have been sent to all men—the red and the black." "Before me a Prophet was sent only to his own people, but I have been sent to all mankind." (Bukhārī, Muslim). "I have been sent to all mankind, and I am the Last of the Prophets." (Muslim).

5. Another translation may be: "To Him belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth." That is, He alone has an exclusive right to it, and no one else has any right to it nor any share in it.

6. That is, "He has neither any relation of direct parenthood to anyone, nor has He taken anyone as a son. Therefore, none else in the universe is entitled to worship. He is Unique and there can be no partner in His Godhead. Thus all those who associate with Him angels or jinns or saints as His offspring, are ignorant. Likewise, those who believe that some one, is His "son", are also ignorant. They have no true conception of the Greatness of Allah and consider Him to be weak and needy like human beings, who require some one to become their inheritor. It is sheer ignorance and folly." For further details, see E.N.'s 66 to 68 of Sūrah Yūnus.

7. The Arabic word *mulk* means Sovereignty, Supreme Authority, and Kingship. Thus the sentence will mean: "Allah is the Absolute Ruler of the whole universe and there is none other who may have any right to authority; therefore He alone is God." For whenever a man takes anything else as his lord, he does so under the presumption that his deity has the power to do good or bring harm and make or mar his fortune; nobody will like to worship a powerless deity. Now when it is recognized that none but Allah has the real power and authority in the universe, nobody will bow before anyone other than Him in worship, nor will sing anybody else's hymns, nor commit the folly of bowing in worship before any thing else except his real God, or recognize any other as his ruler, because "To Allah belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to Him alone."

8. There may be other translations of this also: "He has ordained it in due proportion"; or "He has appointed an exact measure for everything." But no translation can convey its real meaning, which is: "Allah has not only created everything in the universe but also determined its shape, size, potentialities, characteristics, term of existence, the limitations and extent of its development and all other things concerning it. Then, He has created the means and provisions to enable it to function properly in its own separate sphere."

This is one of the most comprehensive verses of the Qur'an with regard to the Doctrine of *Tauhīd*. According to Traditions, the Holy Prophet himself taught this verse to every child of his family as soon as it was able to speak and utter a few words. Thus, this verse is the best means of impressing the Doctrine of *Tauhīd* on our minds, and every Muslim should use it for educating his children as soon as they develop understanding.

9. The words are comprehensive and cover all the false gods

whom the *mushriks* worship whether they are angels, jinns, Prophets, saints, the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, rivers, animals etc., which have been created by Allah, or those which have been created by man, as the idols of stone, wood, etc.

10. That is, "Allah has sent down *Al-Furqān* on His servant so that he may invite the people to the Truth, which they have forsaken due to heedlessness and waywardness, and warn them of the evil consequences of their folly. The *Furqān* is being revealed piecemeal so that he may distinguish right from wrong and the genuine from the counterfeit."

11. Another translation may be: "a great injustice."

12. This is the same objection which the modern orientalisks have raised against the Qur'ān, but strange as it may seem, no contemporary of the Holy Prophet ever raised such an objection against him. Nobody, for instance, ever said that Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) as a boy had met Buḥairah, the monk, and had attained religious knowledge from him, nor did anybody claim that he had obtained all that information from the Christian monks and Jewish rabbis during the trade journeys in his youth. In fact, they knew that he had never travelled alone but in the caravans and if they said such a thing, it would be refuted by hundreds of their own people from the city.

Then, one could ask, if he had gained all that knowledge from Buḥairah when he was about 12, and during trade journeys when he was 25, why did he keep it secret from the people till he became 40? whereas he did not leave his country even for a single day, but lived for years among his own people in the same city. That is why the people of Makkah dared not bring such an impudent and baseless charge against him. Their objections related to the time when he claimed to be a Prophet of Allah and not to the time preceding that claim. Their argument was like this: "This man is illiterate and cannot obtain any knowledge through books. He has lived among us for forty years, but we have never heard from him anything that might have shown that he had any acquaintance with what he is preaching; therefore he must have had the help of other people who copied these things from the writings of the ancients for him: he learns these things from them and recites them as Divine Revelations: this is a fraud." So much so that according to some traditions, they named some of his "helpers", who were the people of the Book, were illiterate and lived in Makkah. They were: (1) 'Addās, a freed slave of Huvaitib bin 'Abdul 'Uzzā, (2) Yasār, a freed slave of 'Alā bin Al-Ḥadrami, and (3) Jabr, a freed slave of 'Āmir bin Rabī'ah.

Apparently this is a weighty argument. For there can be no greater proof of the "fraud" of Prophethood than to specify its source. But it looks strange that no argument has been put forward to refute this

charge except a mere denial, as if to say, "Your charge is an impudent lie : you are cruel and unjust to bring such a false charge against Our Messenger ; for the Qur'ān is the Word of Allah Who knows all the secrets in the heavens and the earth." Had their charge been based on facts, it would not have been rejected with contempt, for in that case the disbelievers would have demanded a detailed and clear answer. But they realized the strength of the arguments and did not make such a demand. Moreover, the fact that the "weighty" argument failed to produce any doubt in the minds of the new Muslims, was a clear proof that it was a lie.

The enigma is clearly explained if we keep in view the prevalent circumstances:

(1) The disbelievers of Makkah did not take any decisive steps to prove their charge, although they could, had there been any truth in their charge. For instance, they could have made raids on the houses of the alleged helpers and on the house of the Holy Prophet himself and taken hold of the whole "material" which was being used in this fraud, and made it public to expose his Prophethood. And this was not difficult for them because they never hesitated to resort to anything to defeat him, including persecution, as they were not bound by any moral code.

(2) The alleged helpers were not strangers. As they lived in Makkah, everyone knew it well how learned they were. The disbelievers themselves knew that they could never have helped to produce a unique and sublime Book like the Qur'ān which had the highest literary excellence and merit. That is why none of them challenged the answer to the charge. That is why even those people, who did not know them, considered this frivolous. Then if the alleged helpers were such geniuses, why did they not claim to be prophets themselves?

(3) Then, all the alleged helpers were freed slaves who were attached to their former masters even after their freedom according to the customs of Arabia; therefore they could not have become willing accomplices of the Holy Prophet in this "fraud" of false prophethood because their former masters could have coerced them to expose it. The only reason for them to help the Holy Prophet in his claim could have been some greed or interest which, under the circumstances, could not even be imagined. Thus, apparently there was no reason why they should have offended those whose protection and patronage they needed and enjoyed, and become accomplices in the "fraud".

(4) Above all, all these alleged helpers embraced Islam. Could it be possible that those very persons, who had helped the Holy Prophet to make his "fraud" successful, could have possibly become his devoted followers? Moreover, if, for the sake of argument, it be admitted that

they helped him, why was not any of them raised to a prominent rank as a reward of his help? Why were not 'Addās and Yasār and Jabr exalted to the same status as were Abū Bakr and 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaidah?

Another odd thing is that if the "fraud" of prophethood was being carried on with the help of the alleged helpers, how could it remain hidden from Zaid bin Hārithah, 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, Abū Bakr and other people, who were the Holy Prophet's closest and devoted Companions? Thus the charge was not only frivolous and false, but it was also below the dignity of the Qur'ān to give any answer to it. The charge has been cited merely to prove that those people had been so blinded by their opposition to the Truth that they could say anything.

13. "...He is very Forgiving and Merciful" is very meaningful here. It means that Allah is giving full respite to the enemies of the Truth, for He is "Forgiving and Merciful"; otherwise He would have sent down a scourge to annihilate them because of the false charges they were bringing against the Messenger. It also contains an admonition, as if to say, "O unjust people! if even now you give up your enmity and obduracy and accept the Truth, We shall forgive your previous misdeeds."

14. That is, "He cannot be a Messenger of Allah because he is a human being like us. Had Allah willed to send a Messenger, He would have sent an angel, and if at all a human being was to be sent, he should have been a king or a millionaire, who would have resided in a castle and been guarded by attendants. A Messenger could not be an ordinary person who has to move about in the market-places like the common people, for it is obvious that such a human Messenger cannot attract the attention of the people. In other words, they thought that a Messenger was not meant to guide the people to the right path but to coerce them to obedience by show of worldly power and grandeur. For further details, see E. N. 26 of Al-Mu'minūn.

15. That is, "If a human being was to be sent as a Messenger, an angel should have been appointed to accompany him to proclaim: 'If you do not believe in him, I will scourge you.' But what sort of a Messenger is he, who has to suffer from abuse and persecution?"

16. That is, "If nothing else, Allah should at least have made extraordinary arrangements for his livelihood. But this man has no treasure and no gardens; yet he claims to be a Messenger of the Lord of the universe."

17. The disbelievers of Makkah made the false propaganda against the Holy Prophet that he had been bewitched by some jinn or by the sorcery of an enemy or by the curse of some god or goddess for his insolence. But it is strange that they also admitted that he was a

clever man, who could make use of extracts from the ancient writings for the sake of his "prophethood", could practise sorcery and was also a poet.

18. As these objections were frivolous and meaningless like others, the Qur'ān has ignored them, saying, "Your objections are irrelevant, unreasonable and void of sense. You bring no sound argument to prove your doctrine of *shirk*, or to refute the Doctrine of *Tauḥīd* put forward by him, whereas the Messenger gives such proofs of the Doctrine of *Tauḥīd* that you cannot refute them except by saying, 'He is bewitched'. The same is true of the doctrine of the life-after-death and of the moral system of the Qur'ān, which has produced men of high character. You cannot deny these things; you reject them, saying, 'He is a human being like us, etc. etc.'"

19. Here again the word *tabāraka* has been used and in the context it means : "Allah has full control over everything and has unlimited powers : if He wills to favour somebody, He can do so as and when He wills without let or hindrance."

20. The word *As-Sā'at*, meaning the Time or the Hour, has been used in the Qur'ān as a term for the promised Hour of Resurrection, when all human beings of all ages will be raised from the dead and gathered together before Allah Almighty to account for their beliefs and deeds, right or wrong, and rewarded or punished accordingly.

21. That is, "The objections they are raising are not due to the reason that they doubt the authenticity of the Qurān on some rational ground, or that they do not believe in you for the reason that you eat food and walk about in the streets like the common people, or that they did not accept your Message of Truth only because you were not escorted by an angel, or were not given a treasure. But the real reason why they are putting forward all sorts of absurd arguments to reject your Message, is that they do not believe in the life-after-death, and this denial has made them free from all moral obligations. For when one denies the life-after-death, there remains no need for him to consider and decide what is true or false, or what is right or wrong, etc. Their argument is like this: 'There is going to be no life after this one on the earth when we will be called to account for our deeds before God. Death will be the end of everything, and it will therefore make no difference whether one was a worshipper of God or a disbeliever or a *mushrik* or an atheist. When the ultimate end is to become one with the dust, there is no need of judging what is right and what is wrong except by the criterion of "success" and "failure" in this life'. Those who deny the Hereafter also see that worldly success or failure does not entirely

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لَنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنْ مَتَّعْتَهُمْ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى
تَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۖ وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا ۗ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوكُمْ بِمَا تَقُولُونَ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيعُونَ
صَرْفًا وَلَا نَصْرًا ۚ وَمَنْ يَظْلِمِ مِّنْكُمْ نَذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيرًا ۗ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا
قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ
وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً ۗ أَتَصْبِرُونَ ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا ۗ

٢
١٤٢
المنجذ ١٩

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلِيكَةُ أَوْ نُنزِلُ

رَبَّنَا ۗ لَقَدْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْا عُتْوًا كَبِيرًا ۗ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلِيكَةَ
لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا ۗ وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَىٰ
مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَنْثُورًا ۗ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ
مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا ۗ وَيَوْمَ تَشَقُّقُ السَّمَاءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلِيكَةُ
تَنْزِيلًا ۗ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْوَاقِعُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ ۗ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا ۗ
وَيَوْمَ يَعْصُ الظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ۗ
يَوَيْلَ لِي لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا ۗ لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذٍ
جَاءَنِي ۗ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا ۗ وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي
اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ
الْمُجْرِمِينَ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَنَصِيرًا ۗ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا
نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ كَذَلِكَ لِنُنشِئَ بِهِ قَوْمًا كَرِيمًا
وَنُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ كَذَلِكَ لِنُنشِئَ بِهِ قَوْمًا كَرِيمًا
تَنْزِيلًا ۗ وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ۗ
الَّذِينَ يُحْشَرُونَ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ

They will answer, "Glory be to Thee! We dared not take any guardian besides Thee: (they were misled because) Thou didst give them and their forefathers all the good things of life till they forgot the Admonition, and incurred the punishment."²⁶ Thus will your gods deny all that you are professing today.²⁷ Then you shall neither be able to repel your punishment nor shall get any help from anywhere; and whoso is guilty of iniquity²⁸ among you, We shall make him taste a severe torment.

O Muḥammad, all the Messengers whom We sent before you also ate food and moved about in the streets.²⁹ In fact, We have made you all a means of test for one another.³⁰ Will you show patience?³¹ for your Lord sees everything.³²

Those people, who have no fear of coming before Us, say, "Why should not the angels be sent down to us?³³ Or else we should see our Lord."³⁴ Great arrogance have they assumed in regard to themselves,³⁵ and have transgressed all limits in their rebellion. The Day, when they will see the angels, will not be a day of rejoicing for the criminals;³⁶ they will cry out, "May Allah save us!" Then We shall turn to what they had done and render it vain like scattered dust.³⁷ (On the contrary) only those who have deserved the Garden, will have a good abode on that Day and a cool place for midday rest.³⁸ On that Day, a cloud will appear rending the sky and the angels will be sent down rank after rank. The real Kingdom on that Day will belong only to the Merciful,³⁹ and it will be a very hard Day for the disbelievers. The unjust man will bite at his hand and say, "Would that I had stood by the Messenger! O, woe to me! Would that I had not chosen so and so for a friend! For it was he, who had deluded me to reject the Admonition which had come to me. Satan has proved very treacherous to man."⁴⁰ And the Messenger will say, "O my Lord, my people had made this Qur'ān the object of their ridicule."⁴¹

O Muḥammad, in this very way We have made the

criminals the enemies of every Prophet,⁴² but your Lord suffices for you as your Guide and Helper.⁴³

32-34

The disbelievers say, "Why has not the entire Qur'ān been sent down to this man all at once?"⁴⁴—Well, this has been done to impress it deeply on your mind,⁴⁵ and (for the same object) We have sent it down piecemeal by degrees. And (there is another wisdom in this:) whenever they brought to you an odd thing (or a strange question), We sent its right answer to you in time and explained it all in the best manner.⁴⁶—Those who are going to be driven to Hell upon their faces, have taken an utterly wrong stand and their way is most erroneous!⁴⁷

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depend upon one's faith or conduct; nay, they very often see that the righteous and the wicked persons meet with the same end irrespective of their faith for which there is no ordained punishment or reward in this life; one righteous person may be living a life of hardship while another enjoying all the good things of life; one wicked person may be suffering for his misdeeds while the other enjoying a life of pleasure and plenty. As such, as far as the worldly consequences of adopting a particular moral attitude are concerned, the disbelievers in the Hereafter cannot be satisfied whether it is right or wrong. In view of this, those who deny the Hereafter, do not see any need to consider an invitation to faith and morality even if it is presented in a most forceful way."

22. "The Fire will see them" : The words used in the Text may be metaphorical, or they may mean that the Fire of Hell will be endowed with the faculties of seeing, thinking and judging.

23. Literally: "It is a promise whose fulfilment can be demanded (from Allah)".

Here one may ask the question: How can the promise of the Garden and the threat of the Fire produce any effect on the attitude of a person who denies Resurrection and the existence of Paradise and Hell? In order to understand the wisdom of this method of admonition, one should keep in view this that it is meant to appeal to the self-interest of an obdurate person, who does not otherwise listen to such arguments. This is, as if to say, "Even if, for the sake of argument, there is no proof of the reality of the life-after-death, there is also no proof that such an event will not occur at all, and there is a possibility for both. In the latter case, the Believer and the disbeliever both will be in one and the same position, but if

there is life in the Hereafter, as the Prophet asserts, then the disbelievers will be doomed to utter ruin". Therefore, such an approach breaks the stubbornness of the disbelievers and proves to be highly effective when the entire scene of Resurrection, gathering of the people, their accountability and of Hell and Heaven is presented in a vivid manner as if the Prophet had himself seen it with his own eyes. For further explanation, see Hā Mīm Sajdah: 52 and E. N. 69 thereof, and Al-Aḥqāf: 10.

24. Here, deities do not mean idols but the angels, the prophets, the saints, the martyrs and the pious men, whom the *mushriks* of different communities have made their deities.

25. Such dialogues between Allah and the gods of the disbelievers occur at several places in the Qur'ān. For instance, in Sūrah Sabā it has been stated: "On the day when He will gather them all together, He will ask the angels, 'Did these people worship you?' They will answer, 'Glory be to Thee! Thou art our Patron and not they: they in fact worshipped the jinns (that is, satans); most of these believed in them.'" (vv. 40-41). Similarly in Sūrah Al-Mā'idah, it is said: "And when Allah will say 'O Jesus, son of Mary, did you ever say to the people: 'Make me and my mother gods instead of Allah?' He will answer, 'Glory be to Thee! It did not behove me to say that which I had no right to say...I told them only that which Thou didst bid me: 'Worship Allah, Who is my Lord as well as your Lord'.'" (vv. 116, 117).

26. That is, "They were mean people: You gave them all the provisions of life so that they may show gratitude to You, but they became ungrateful and ignored all the admonitions given by the Prophets."

27. That is, "On that Day your religion, which you now believe to be true, will prove to be false and even your gods, whom you yourselves have set up, will declare it to be a lie; for none of them ever asked you to make them your deities and worship them as such. Consequently, instead of interceding on your behalf, they will bear witness against you."

28. "... who will be guilty of iniquity ...": "... who will be unjust to the Reality and the Truth and guilty of disbelief and *shirk*." The context shows that those who reject the Prophet and set up other deities instead of Allah and deny life in the Hereafter, are guilty of *dhulm* (iniquity).

29. This is an answer to the objection of the disbelievers of Makkah that Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) could not be a Messenger of Allah because he ate food and moved about in the streets.

They have been told that all the Messengers of Allah who came before Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) like Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses and many others whom they knew and acknowledged as Prophets and Messengers of Allah also ate food and walked about in the streets. Nay, even Prophet Jesus, son of Mary, himself, whom the Christians had made the son of God (and whose image had also been placed in the Ka'bah by the disbelievers of Makkah) ate food and walked about in the streets like a common man even according to the Gospels themselves.

30. It is obvious that the Messenger and the Believers were a test for the disbelievers as to whether they would believe even after hearing the Divine Message and seeing their pure character. On the other hand, the disbelievers were a test for the Messenger and his followers in the sense that they were a means of proving and trying their true Faith by their persecution. For it is this test alone which helps to discriminate the true Believers from the hypocrites. That is why, at first, only the poor and the helpless but sincere people embraced Islam. Had there been no persecution and hardships but prosperity, wealth and grandeur, the worshippers of the world and the selfish people would have been the first to embrace Islam.

31. That is, "Now when you have understood the wisdom of the test by persecution, it is hoped that you will endure all kinds of hardships without complaint, and willingly undergo the persecutions that are inevitable."

32. It probably means two things: First, the way your Lord is conducting your affairs, is according to His will and nothing that happens is without His knowledge. Second, He is fully aware of your sincerity and righteousness in serving His cause under all kinds of hardships. You should therefore rest assured that you will have your full reward. He also sees the persecution and iniquity of the disbelievers; therefore they will not escape the consequences of their wickedness.

33. That is, "If Allah had really intended to convey His Message to us, He would not have chosen a prophet and sent an angel only to him, but to each one of us individually with the guidance, or He should have sent a deputation of angels to appear before the people with the Message". The same objection has been stated in Sūrah Al-An'ām thus: "When a Revelation comes before them, they say, 'We will not believe in it unless we are given the like of what has been given to the Messengers of Allah.' Allah knows best whom to entrust with His Mission and how it should be enforced." (v. 124)

34. That is, "Allah Himself should appear before us and make the appeal."

35. Another translation could be: "They have formed a very high opinion of their own selves."

36. This very theme has been expressed in much greater detail in Al-Anām: 8, Al-Hijr: 7-8 and 51-64, and also in Banī Isra'il: 90-95.

37. For explanation, see Ibrahim: 18 and E. N.'s 25, 26 thereof.

38. In contrast to the miserable plight of the disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection, the Believers will be protected from the hardships of that Day; they will be treated with honour and will have a blissful place for midday rest. According to a Tradition, the Holy Prophet said: "I declare on oath by Allah, in Whose hand is my life, that the long, horrible Day of Resurrection will be made very short and light for a Believer, as short and light as the time taken in offering an obligatory Prayer." (Musnad Aḥmad)

39. That is, "On that Day all other kingdoms, which deluded man in the world, will come to an end, and there will be only the Kingdom of Allah, Who is the real Sovereign of the universe. In Sūrah Mu'min: 16, the same thing has been stated thus: "On that Day when all the people will stand exposed, and nothing of them will be hidden from Allah, it will be asked, 'Whose is the Sovereignty today?' The response from every side will be: 'Of Allah, the Almighty'."* According to a Tradition, the Holy Prophet said, "Allah will take the heavens in one hand and the earth in the other, and will declare: 'I am the Sovereign: I am the Ruler. Where are the other rulers of the earth? Where are those tyrants? Where are the arrogant people?'" (Musnad Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Da'ūd, with slight variations).

40. "Satan has proved very treacherous to man" may also be a part of the disbelievers' lament, or it may be a remark by Allah, in which case the meaning will be: "And Satan is indeed the one who always deceives man."

41. The Arabic word *mahjūr* is capable of several meanings. As such, the sentence may mean: "These people did not regard the Qur'ān as worthy of their consideration: they neither accepted it nor followed it"; or "They considered it to be a nonsense or the delirium of insanity: or "They made it the target of their ridicule and mockery."

42. That is, "It is not a new thing that the disbelievers have become your enemies, for it has always been so with all the former Prophets and Messengers. (See also Al-An'ām: 112-113). This is inevitable because it is Our Law that the criminals will always oppose the Truth. You should, therefore, pursue your mission with full confidence and determination without expecting any immediate results."

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سَبِيلًا ۗ وَ لَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوسٰى الْكِتٰبَ وَ جَعَلْنَا مَعَهُ اَخَاهُ هٰرُونَ وَزِيْرًا ۗ
فَقُلْنَا اِذْهَبْ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِآيٰتِنَا فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ۗ وَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ
لَّمَّا كَذَّبُوْا الرَّسُوْلَ اَعْرَقْنٰهُمْ وَ جَعَلْنٰهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً ۗ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّٰلِمِيْنَ
عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۗ وَ عَادًا وَ ثُوْدًا وَ اَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ وَ قُرُوْنًا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ كَثِيْرًا ۗ
وَ كُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْاَمْثَالَ ۗ وَ كُلًّا تَبَرْنَا تَنْبِيْرًا ۗ وَ لَقَدْ اَتَوْنَا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي
اَمْطَرْنَا مَطْرَ السَّوْءِ ۗ اَفَلَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَرْوْنَهَا ۗ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نُشُوْرًا ۗ وَ
اِذَا رَاوْكَ اِنْ يَتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ۗ اٰمٰذَا الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ اللهُ رَسُوْلًا اِنْ كَادَ
لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ الْهَيْتٰنَا لَوْلَا اَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ۗ وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ حِيْنَ يَرَوْنَ
الْعَذَابَ مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ۗ اَرَاَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهُ هَوٰهٗ ۗ اَفَاَنْتَ تَكُوْنُ
عَلَيْهِ وَكِيْلًا ۗ اَمْ تَحْسَبُ اَنْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْقِلُوْنَ ۗ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا كَالْاَنْعَامِ
بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ۗ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الْبَطْنَ ۗ وَ لَوْ شَاءَ لَجَعَلَهُ
سٰكِنًا ۗ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيْلًا ۗ ثُمَّ قَبَضْنٰهُ اِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا سَبِيْرًا ۗ
وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَ النَّوْمَ سُبٰتًا وَ جَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نَشُوْرًا ۗ
وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْ اَرْسَلَ الرِّيْحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۗ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً
طَهُوْرًا ۗ لِنُحْيِيَ بِهٖ بَلَدًا مَّيْتًا وَ نُسْقِيْهِ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا اَنْعَامًا وَ اِنَّا سَمِيْرًا ۗ
وَ لَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ۗ فَاَبٰى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ۗ وَ لَوْ شِئْنَا
لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ تَذِيْرًا ۗ فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَ جَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا
كَبِيْرًا ۗ وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَ هٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَابٌ ۗ
وَ جَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ۗ وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَآءِ بَشْرًا

We gave Moses the Book⁴⁸ and appointed his brother Aaron as his counsellor: then We said to them, "Go to the people who have treated Our Revelations as false."⁴⁹ So We annihilated those people utterly. The same was the case with the people of Noah when they charged the Messenger with imposture:⁵⁰ We drowned them and made them a sign of warning for entire mankind, and We have prepared a painful chastisement for the unjust.⁵¹ Likewise were destroyed the 'Ād and the Thamūd and the people of the Rass,⁵² and many a generation in between. We admonished each one of them by citing the examples (of those who were destroyed before them) and ultimately annihilated all of them. Surely, these people have passed by that habitation on which was rained an evil rain:⁵³ have they not seen its ruins ? But they do not expect another life in the Hereafter.⁵⁴

When these people see you, they scoff at you, (saying), "Is this the man whom Allah has sent as His Messenger? He had almost led us astray from our gods, had we not remained firm in our faith with regard to them."⁵⁵ The time is not far when they will see the torment and realize who had strayed far from the truth.

41-42

Have you ever considered the case of the person who has made his lust his god?⁵⁶ Can you take the responsibility of guiding such a one aright? Do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only like the cattle ; nay, even worse than the cattle.⁵⁷

43-44

Have you not seen how your Lord lengthens out the shadow? Had He willed, He would have made it constant, but We have made the sun its pilot;⁵⁸ then (as the sun climbs up), We roll it up little by little towards Ourselves.⁵⁹

45-46

And it is Allah Who has ordained the night as a garment⁶⁰ for you, and the sleep as a repose of death, and the day as the time of return to life.⁶¹

47

And it is He, Who drives the winds to be the harbingers of His mercy: then He sends down pure water⁶² from

48-50

the sky so that He, may revive the dead land, and quench the thirst of many of His creatures from among beasts and men.⁶³ We present the same phenomenon over and over again before them⁶⁴ so that they may learn a lesson from it; but most people decline to adopt any other attitude than of disbelief and ingratitude.⁶⁵

51-52 Had We willed, We would have raised up a separate Warner in each habitation.⁶⁶ So, O Prophet, do not yield to the disbelievers, but wage a strenuous *Jihād* against them with this Qur'ān.⁶⁷

53 And it is He, Who has let loose the two seas, one palatable and sweet, the other bitter and saltish, and there is a partition between them, which is an insurmountable barrier.⁶⁸

54 And it is He, Who created man from water: then from him He caused two kinds of kindred, by blood and by marriage:⁶⁹ your Lord is All-Powerful.

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43. "Guidance" does not only imply bestowing of the knowledge of the Truth, but it also means giving the right guidance at the right time to guide the Islamic Movement on the right lines and to defeat the strategy and scheme of the enemies of Islam. "Help" means all kinds of moral, spiritual and material help to the followers of the Truth in their conflict against falsehood. Thus, Allah is All-Sufficient for the righteous people and they need no other support provided they have full faith in Allah and fight falsehood with all their energies and strength.

This meant to encourage the Holy Prophet, otherwise the previous assertion would have been very discouraging without this. It meant to say, "Even if the unbelievers have become your enemies, you should continue your mission, for We shall guide you in every stage and situation and help you against them. We shall defeat all the schemes of your enemies and help you in every way in your conflict with falsehood. We shall provide you with material means also, but you should trust in Us and exert your utmost against falsehood."

44. As the disbelievers of Makkah considered this objection to be very strong, they repeated it over and over again. The Qur'ān also has cited it with its answer at several places; for instance, see E.N.'s 101-106 of Sūrah An-Naml and E.N. 119 of Banī Isra'īl. Their question implied: "Had the Qur'ān been really the Word of Allah, it would have been sent

as a complete book all at once; for Allah has the knowledge of everything and every human affair. Thus it is obvious that nothing is being sent down from above; but this man himself fabricates all its themes or gets these from other people or other books."

45. Another translation can be : "So that by it We may strengthen your heart and imbue it with courage." The words are comprehensive and imply both the meanings. This concise sentence contains the following explanation why the Qur'ān was revealed piecemeal by degrees:

(1) So that the Holy Prophet may commit it to memory perfectly and recite it to his people, who are illiterate, rather than present it in a written form.

(2) So that its teachings and messages may be impressed deeply on the minds.

(3) So that the way of life it teaches, may be followed with complete conviction, which would not be possible if all the Commandments and the whole system of life had been sent down all at once.

(4) So that the hearts of the Prophet and his followers may be imbued with courage during the conflict between the Truth and falsehood. This required that the Divine Guidance and messages of encouragement should be revealed as and when needed according to the practical situation. Obviously, this could not have been possible if these had been sent down all at once. This also showed that Allah had not left His Messenger alone amidst persecution to counter all sorts of resistance and opposition after appointing him to the mission, but He Himself was watching the struggle with concern and guiding His Prophet through every difficulty by direct communion in every critical situation.

46. This is yet another point of wisdom of sending down the Qur'ān by degrees. Allah did not intend to produce a book on "Guidance" and spread its teachings through the agency of His Prophet. Had it been so the disbelievers would have been justified in their objection as to why the Qur'ān had not been sent down as a complete book all at once. The real object of the revelation of the Qur'ān was that Allah intended to start a Movement of faith, piety and righteousness to combat disbelief, ignorance and sin, and He had raised a Prophet to lead and guide the Movement. Then, on the one hand, Allah had taken it upon Himself to send necessary instructions and guidance to the leader and his followers as and when needed, and on the other, He had also taken the responsibility to answer the objections and remove the doubts of opponents and give the right interpretation of things which they misunderstood. Thus the Qur'ān was the collection of the different discourses that were being revealed by Allah; it was not merely meant to

be a code of laws or of moral principles, but a Book, which was being sent down piecemeal to guide the Movement in all its stages to suit its requirements on different occasions. (See also Introduction: *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. I, pp. 9-18).

47. That is, "They will be driven towards Hell upon their faces because of their perversion and their preverted thinking."

48. Here by "the Book" is not meant the Torah, which was given to Prophet Moses after the exodus from Egypt, but it implies that Divine Guidance which was given to him after his appointment as a Prophet up to the Exodus. It included the orations delivered by him in the court of Pharaoh and also the instructions given to him during his conflict with Pharaoh as mentioned in the Qur'ān here and there. Most probably, these things were not included in the Torah; the Torah began with the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses engraved on stone tablets on Mount Sinai after the Exodus.

49. "Revelations" : The Divine teachings which had reached them through Prophets Jacob and Joseph, and which had been preached to them by the righteous people of Israel for centuries.

50. They did not charge only Prophet Noah with imposture because he was a man, but, in fact, charged all the Prophets with imposture because they were all human beings.

51. That is, a painful chastisement in the Hereafter.

52. There is no definite knowledge about "the people of the Rass". Different commentators have said different things about them, but nothing is convincing. The only thing that may be said about them is that they were a people who had killed their Prophet by throwing him into or hanging him down a "Rass" (an old or dry well).

53. The habitation referred to was that of the people of Prophet Lot, which was destroyed by a rain of stones. The people of Hijāz while travelling to Palestine and Syria, passed by its ruins and heard the horrible tales of its destruction.

54. As the disbelievers did not believe in the Hereafter, they looked at these ancient ruins as mere spectators and did not take any warning from them. Incidentally, this is the difference between the observation of a disbeliever and of a Believer in the Hereafter: the former looks at such things as a mere spectator or at the most as an archaeologist whereas the latter learns moral lessons from the same and obtains an insight into the realities beyond this worldly life.

55. Obviously there is a contradiction between the question posed by the disbelievers and the assertion made by them about their deities. The question was meant to bring the Holy Prophet into contempt, as if to say, "You are making a claim that is far above your low position." On the other hand, their assertion shows that they indirectly admitted

the force of the arguments and the high character of the Holy Prophet and were even afraid of the effectiveness and success of his Message, because, according to them, it was going to turn them away from their false gods.

56. "...the person who makes his lust his god" is the one who becomes the slave of his lusts and desires. As he serves his lust like the one who worships his deity, he becomes as much guilty of *shirk* as the one who worships an idol. According to a Tradition, related by Hadrat Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said, "Of all the false gods being worshipped and served, instead of Allah, the worst in the sight of Allah is one's own lust." (Ṭabarānī). For further explanation, see E.N. 50 of Al-Kahf.

The man who keeps his desires under control, and uses his common sense to make decisions, can be expected to come to the right path by making an appeal to his reason even though he might have been involved in *shirk* or disbelief; for if he decides to follow the right way he will remain firm and steadfast on it. On the other hand, the man who is the slave of his own lust, is like a ship without an anchor, who wanders about on any path where his lust leads him. He is least bothered about the distinction between the right and the wrong, the true and the false, and has no desire to choose one against the other. And, if at all, such a person is persuaded to accept the message of Guidance, no one can take the responsibility that he will observe any moral laws.

57. "They are only like the cattle" because they follow their lusts blindly. Just as the sheep and cattle do not know where their driver is taking them, to the meadow or to the slaughter house, so are these people also following their leaders blindly without knowing or judging where they are being led—to success or to destruction. The only difference between the two is that the cattle have no intelligence and will not be accountable as to the place where they are being taken by the driver. But it is a pity that human beings who are endowed with reason, should behave like cattle; therefore their condition is worse than that of cattle.

Incidentally, it should be noted that this passage (vv. 43, 44) is not meant to dissuade the Holy Prophet from conveying the Message to such people, but it is an indirect warning to the disbelievers of the consequences if they continued to behave like cattle.

58. The word *dalil* has been used in the sense of the "pilot", who is a person trained to take ships safely in or out of a harbour, or along a waterway. The sun has been made the pilot of the shadow because the lengthening out of the shadow and its being rolled up depends on the rising, declining and setting of the sun.

59. "We roll it up...Ourselves": "We annihilate it or cause it to disappear", for everything which is annihilated returns to Allah, because everything comes from Him and returns to Him.

The Qur'an has used the phenomenon of the shadow caused by the sun for two purposes. If it is taken literally, it is meant to warn the disbelievers that they should learn a lesson from this and should not behave like cattle, as if to say, "If you had considered the benefits of the shadow in regard to your everyday experience, you would have accepted without any hesitation the Doctrine of *Tauhid*. Had the shadow been constant, there would have been no life on earth, for life depends on the light and heat of the sun. On the other hand, if there had been no shadow at all, the constant heat and light of the sun would have made life impossible. Besides this, if there had been sudden changes in the sun and the shadow, they would not have been able to endure it for long; therefore you should reflect on this phenomenon and understand it well that it has been so ordained by the All-Wise and the All-Powerful Creator so that it always increases or decreases gradually in accordance with fixed natural laws. Thus it is obvious that it could not have come into existence by itself nor produced by blind mechanisms nor functioned so regularly and continuously under many independent gods."

But if it is taken in the metaphorical sense, there is between the lines a subtle suggestion, and it is this: Just as the shadow does not remain in one and the same state, likewise the shadow of disbelief and *shirk*, which appears to have spread far and wide, will begin to shorten as the "Sun" of Guidance gradually rises; but it requires patience, for Allah never brings about sudden changes.

60. The night is a "garment" in the sense that it covers and hides things.

61. This verse has three objects:

(1) It provides a proof of *Tauhid*,
 (2) It furnishes a proof of the possibility of life-after-death from everyday human experience, and

(3) It bears the good news that the night of ignorance has come to an end and now the bright day of Knowledge and Guidance has dawned. It is therefore inevitable that those who were sleeping the sleep of ignorance, will sooner or later wake up, but those who have slept the sleep of death, will not wake up and will themselves be deprived of life, while the business of the day will go on thriving even without them.

62. That is, such water as is pure and free from all sorts of impurities, germs and poison, which cleanses and washes away filth and becomes a source of life for men, beasts as well as all kinds of plant

life.

63. This verse also gives proofs of the Doctrine of *Tauhid* and the Hereafter. Besides, it contains a subtle suggestion that the period of the "drought" of ignorance has been replaced through Allah's mercy by the "blessed rain" of Prophethood, which is showering the life-giving knowledge of Revelation from which many servants of Allah will certainly benefit, if not all.

64. "We present...before them" may have three meanings:

(1) "We have cited the phenomenon of rainfall over and over again in the Qur'ān in order to make plain to them the Reality."

(2) "We are time and again showing them the wonderful phenomenon of the heat and drought, seasonal winds and clouds, rainfall and its life-producing effects."

(3) "We go on changing the system of the distribution of rainfall throughout the world year after year, so that the same place does not receive the same amount of rainfall every time: sometimes a place is left completely dry, another has more or less of rainfall than usual, while some other is flooded with rain water. They see all these different phenomena with their countless different results in their daily life."

65. The verse means to impress that the wonderful system of rainfall is by itself a proof of the existence of Allah, of One Lord of the universe, and of His attributes. Its wonderful distribution during the year and over different parts of the earth is a clear proof that there is an All-Wise Designer. But the obdurate disbelievers do not learn any lesson from it, and persist in their ingratitude, though this has been cited in the Qur'ān repeatedly for this purpose.

It is also a proof of the life-after-death, for the disbelievers themselves see it time and again that rainfall brings to life dead land year after year. This clearly proves that Allah has the power to bring the dead back to life, but the disbelievers do not learn any lesson from it and persist in their irresponsible ways.

If verse 48 is taken in the metaphorical sense, the "pure water" of rain will mean the blessings of Prophethood. Human history shows that whenever this blessing has been sent down, ignorance has been replaced by knowledge, injustice by justice and wickedness by righteousness. The coming of Prophets has always proved to be the harbinger of a moral revolution. But only those who accepted their guidance benefited from it. This is the lesson of history, yet the disbelievers reject it because of their ingratitude.

66. That is, "If We had willed, We could have sent a separate Prophet to every habitation but We did not do so, because like

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فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا ۝ وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا
 لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا ۝ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا
 مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۝ قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ إِلَىٰ
 رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا ۝ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَىٰ الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ
 بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا ۝ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ
 أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ الرَّحْمَنُ فَسَأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا ۝ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ
 اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَنِ قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَنُ أَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَأْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُورًا ۝
 تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا ۗ وَهُوَ
 الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا ۝
 وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ
 قَالُوا سَلَامًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ
 رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ۗ إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا
 وَمُقَامًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
 قَوَامًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي
 حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ ۗ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا ۝ يُضَاعَفْ
 لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخَلُدْ فِيهِ مُهَانًا ۗ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَ
 عَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
 رَحِيمًا ۝ وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ
 لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ ۗ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ۝ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا

Yet they worship, instead of Allah, those who can neither benefit them nor harm them: more than this, the disbeliever has become a helper of every rebel against his Lord.⁷⁰ 55

O Muḥammad, We have sent you only to proclaim good tidings and to give warning.⁷¹ Tell them, "I do not ask of you any recompense for this work: I only ask of the one, who will, to adopt the way of his Lord."^{71a} 56-57

O Muḥammad, trust in that Allah Who is Ever-Living and will never die: Glorify Him with His praise, for He alone is sufficient to be aware of the sins of His servants. In six days He created the earth and the heavens and all that is between them; then He established Himself on the "Throne" (of the Kingdom of the universe).⁷² (He is) the Merciful: as to His Glory, ask the one who knows. 58-59

When it is said to them, "Prostrate yourselves before the Merciful," they retort, "What is the Merciful? Would you have us prostrate ourselves before whomsoever you will?"⁷³ And this invitation only helps to increase their hatred all the more.⁷⁴ 60

Highly blessed is He, Who has made fortified spheres⁷⁵ in the heavens and has set in it a "lamp"⁷⁶ and a shining moon. He it is Who caused the night and the day to succeed each other so that everyone who desires may learn a lesson or become grateful.⁷⁷ 61-62

The (true) servants of the Merciful are those⁷⁸ who walk humbly on the earth:⁷⁹ who, when the ignorant people behave insolently towards them, say, "Peace to you":⁸⁰ who pass their nights in prostrating themselves and standing before their Lord:⁸¹ who pray, "Our Lord, save us from the torment of Hell, for its torment is killing: it is an evil abode and an evil resting place":⁸² who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly but keep the golden mean between the two (extremes):⁸³ who do not invoke any god but Allah nor kill a soul, which Allah has forbidden, unjustly, nor commit adultery.⁸⁴ 63-73

—He who does this shall be punished for his sin, and his torment shall be doubled on the Day of Resurrection,⁸⁵ and he shall abide in a state of ignominy, except the one who may have repented (after those sins) and have believed and done righteous works,⁸⁶ for then Allah will change his evil deeds into good deeds, and He is very Forgiving and Merciful. In fact, the one who repents and does righteous deeds, returns to Allah as one rightly should.⁸⁸—(And the servants of the Merciful are those:) who do not bear witness to falsehood⁸⁹ and who, if they have ever to pass by what is vain, pass by like dignified people:⁹⁰ who do not behave like the blind and the deaf, when the Revelations of their Lord are recited to them for admonition:⁹¹

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the sun, Our Last Prophet suffices to enlighten the whole world.”

67. The Arabic words *Jihād-i-Kabīr* imply three meanings:

- (1) To exert one's utmost for the cause of Islam,
- (2) To dedicate all one's resources to this cause, and

(3) To fight against the enemies of Islam on all possible fronts with all one's resources in order to raise high the “Word of Allah”. This will include *Jihād* with one's tongue, pen, wealth, life and every other available weapon.

68. This phenomenon has been perceived in many places in the sea and on the land that sweet water and bitter water has existed side by side. Turkish Admiral Syedī Al-Ra'īs, in his book *Mir'āt-al-Mamālik*, written in the 16th century, has mentioned a place in the Persian Gulf, where springs of sweet water exist under the bitter waters of the sea, where he could get drinking water for his fleet. The American Oil Company at first obtained water from the same springs in the Persian Gulf, before they dug up wells near Dhahran for supply of drinking water. Near Bahrain also there exist springs of sweet water at the sea bed from which people have been taking water until quite recently.

Besides this apparent meaning which gives a rational proof of Allah's being the One and the only Lord of the universe, the verse contains a subtle suggestion as well: When Allah wills, He can raise up a righteous community from among a large wicked society just as He can cause springs of palatable and sweet water to gush out from under the salty waters of the sea.

69. Here the miracle of the birth of man from a mere sperm drop and the procreation of his offspring from man and woman have

been cited as a proof of *Tauhid*. Though both man and woman belong to the same genus, they are two species, having important common human characteristics but different physical structures and psychological traits. It is a proof of *Tauhid* that the All-Powerful Allah has used this "difference" for making the two as complements and not antagonists. It is also the design of the All-Powerful Creator that He is creating sons and daughters in the world in due proportion. Then the sons marry and create blood relationships, and the daughters are married and become means of forming new relationships. This process goes on widening to produce families, tribes and nations belonging to the same race and bound by the same civilization.

The verse has also a subtle suggestion: The whole of life is being run on the principle of "difference", for example, the difference between the night and the day, the summer and the winter, etc. Therefore, "O Muslims, you should patiently endure the differences you are having with your opponents for these are certain to produce good results."

70. This is a characteristic of the typical disbeliever: he is a helper and defender of all those who are rebels against Allah and an enemy of all those who may be striving to raise Allah's Word and enforce His Law in the world; he is associated directly or indirectly with all the works of Allah's disobedience and opposes and resists in one way or the other every effort that is made to bring people to the path of Allah's obedience and service.

71. This verse (56) was meant to comfort the Holy Prophet and to warn the disbelievers who opposed him and obstructed his work, as if to say, "Your duty is only to convey the Message of good news to the people and to warn them of the consequences of disbelief: you are not responsible as to whether they accept your Message or reject it, or to reward the Believers and punish the disbelievers."

Such words occur in the Qur'an at other places also and are obviously directed to the disbelievers, as if to say, "The Message of the Prophet is meant to reform the people without any tinge of selfishness. As he does not force the people to accept his Message, there is no reason why you should feel offended. If you accept the Message, it will be for your own good, and if you reject it, you will be harming yourselves alone. For after conveying the Message, he is relieved of his duty and responsibility; then the matter will be between you and Us."

Although this is a very simple and clear interpretation of verse 56 (and of similar other verses), yet some people erroneously conclude from

it that the only duty and responsibility of the Prophet is to convey the Message and nothing else. They forget that the Qur'ān has stressed over and over again that the Prophet is not only a giver of good news to the Believers but he is also their teacher, their law-giver, judge and guide, a purifier of their morals and a model of life for them, and that every word which he utters is law which they have to obey and follow willingly in all walks of life and for all times to come.

71(a). For explanation, see E.N. 70 of Al-Mu'minūn.

72. For explanation of "Throne", see E.N.'s 41, 42 of Al-A'rāf, E.N. 4 of Yūnus, and E.N. 7 of Hūd.

It is difficult to say what exactly is meant by "six days". Here a "day" may mean a period of time or an ordinary day of this world. For explanation of the "day", see E.N.'s 11 to 15 of Sūrah Hā Mim Sajdah.

73. This they said due to their arrogance and stubbornness just as Pharaoh had said to Prophet Moses: "What is the Lord of the universe?" For the disbelievers of Makkah were not unaware of the Merciful (*Raḥmān*), nor was Pharaoh unaware of the "Lord of the universe". The wording of the verse itself shows that their question about the "Merciful" was not the result of their ignorance of Him but was due to their rebelliousness; otherwise Allah would not have punished them for this but would have informed them politely that He Himself is "Merciful". Besides this, it is well known historically that the word *Raḥmān* (Merciful) for Allah had been in common usage in Arabia since the ancient times. Please see also E.N. 5 of As-Sajdah and E.N. 35 of Sabā.

74. All scholars are agreed that here a 'Prostration of Recital' (*Sajdah Talāwat*) has been enjoined, which means that every reader and every hearer must prostrate himself on reciting or hearing the recital of this verse. According to traditions, the one who hears this verse being recited should say: *Zādan-Allahu, khudū'an-ammā zada lil-ā'dāā-i nufūra*: "May Allah increase us in humility even as the enemies are increased in their hatred."

75. See E.N.'s 8 to 12 of Al-Ḥijr.

76. That is, the sun, as mentioned clearly in Sūrah Nūh: 16: "... and made the sun a lamp."

77. The observation and deep consideration of the wonderful phenomenon of the alternation of the day and night is a proof of *Tauḥīd* and His Providence so that man may feel grateful to Him and prostrate himself before Him in all humility.

78. That is, "Though all human beings are by birth the servants of the Merciful before Whom you have been invited to prostrate yourselves, and which you disdain, his true servants are those who adopt the way of

His obedience consciously and develop such desirable characteristics. Then the natural consequences of the prostration are those found in the lives of the Believers and the evil results of rejecting the invitation, those found in your lives." Here attention is being drawn to the two patterns of character and life: first of those who had accepted the Message of the Holy Prophet and were following it, and the second of those who persisted in the ways of ignorance. Here only the prominent characteristics of the true Believers have been cited, and for contrast, the characteristics of the disbelievers have been left to every discerning eye and mind which could see them all around in society and make its own decision.

79. That is, "They do not walk haughtily and arrogantly like the tyrants and mischief-makers, but their "gait" is of a gentle, right-thinking and good-natured person." "Walking humbly" does not mean walking like a weak or sick person, nor does it imply the gait of a hypocrite who walks ostentatiously to show humility or fear of God. According to Traditions, the Holy Prophet himself used to walk with firm, quick steps. One day Caliph 'Umar saw a young man walking slowly like a weak, sick person, and asked him, "Are you ill?" When the man replied in the negative, the Caliph raised his whip, rebuked him and told him to walk like a healthy man. This shows that the "humble gait" is the natural gait of a noble and gentle person and not a gait which shows weakness and undue humility.

In this connection, the first characteristic of the true servants of Allah to which attention has been drawn, is their "gait". This is because the gait indicates the character of an individual. If a man walks in a humble and dignified way, as opposed to a haughty, vain and proud manner, it shows that he is a noble and gentle person. Thus the different "gaits" of the different types of people show what sort of characters they possess. The verse means to imply that the true servants of the Merciful can be easily recognized by their "gait" among the people. Their attitude of Allah's worship and obedience has changed them so thoroughly that it can be seen at first sight from their "gait" that they are noble, humble and good-natured people, who cannot be expected to indulge in any mischief. For further explanation, see E.N. 43 of Banī Isra'īl and E.N. 33 of Luqmān.

80. "Ignorant people": Rude and insolent people and not uneducated and illiterate ones. The true servants of the "Merciful" do not believe in "vengeance", even though they may have to deal with the ignorant people who behave rudely and insolently towards them. If they happen to come across such people, they wish them peace and turn away. The same thing has been expressed in Al-Qaṣaṣ: 55, thus: "And when they hear something vain and absurd, they turn away from it, saying,

'Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you: peace be to you: we have nothing to do with the ignorant.'" For details see E.N.'s 72 to 78 of Al-Qaṣaṣ.

81. That is, they neither spend their nights in fun and merry-making nor in gossips and telling tales, nor in doing wicked deeds, for these are the ways of the ignorant people. The true servants of Allah pass their nights in worshipping and remembering Him as much as they can. This characteristic of theirs has been brought out clearly at several places in the Qur'ān, thus: "their backs forsake their beds and they invoke their Lord in fear and in hope." (As-Sajdah: 16). "These people (of Paradise) slept but little at night, and prayed for their forgiveness in the hours of the morning." (Az-Zāriyāt: 17, 18). And: "Can the end of the one, who is obedient to Allah, prostrates himself and stands before Him during the hours of the night, fears the Hereafter and places his hope in the mercy of his Lord, be like that of a *mushrik*?" (Az-Zumar: 9).

82. That is, their worship has not made them vain and proud to presume that they are the beloved ones of Allah and that the Fire of Hell will not touch them. On the other hand, in spite of all their worship and good deeds, they are so filled with the fear of the torment of Hell that they pray to their Lord to save them from it, for they do not depend upon their own work for success in the Hereafter but upon the mercy of Allah.

83. The true servants of Allah adopt "the golden mean" between the two extremes in spending their money. They neither go beyond prudence and necessity in expenditure nor live in wretched circumstances in order to save and hoard money but are frugal. This was the characteristic of the followers of the Holy Prophet, which distinguished them from the well-to-do people of Arabia, who were either spend-thrifts in regard to the gratification of their own lusts or niggardly in spending their money on good works.

According to Islam extravagance is: (1) To spend even the smallest amount of money in unlawful ways, (2) to go beyond one's own resources in expenditure even in lawful ways, or to spend money for one's own pleasure, and (3) to spend money in righteous ways not for the sake of Allah but for mere show. On the other hand, one is miserly if one does not spend money for one's own needs and requirements and those of one's family in accordance with one's resources and position, or if one does not spend money for good works. The way taught by Islam is the golden mean between the two extremes. The Holy Prophet has said, "It is a sign of wisdom to adopt the "golden mean" in one's living." (Aḥmad, Ṭabarānī).

84. The true servants refrain from three great sins: *Shirk*, murder and adultery. The Holy Prophet himself warned of their gravity. According to ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, when some one asked him about the worst sins, he replied, (1) “It is to set up someone as equal in rank with Allah, Who has created you, (2) to kill your own child for fear of its sustenance, and (3) to commit adultery with the wife of your neighbour.” (Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmizī, Nasā‘ī, Aḥmad). Obviously this is not a complete list of the “heinous sins”. But these three instances have been cited because they were most prevalent in the Arab society of those days.

As regards the inclusion of refraining from *shirk* among the excellences of the true servants, one may ask why it should be presented as virtue before the disbelievers who did not regard *shirk* as a vice. It is because the Arabs had doubts about the doctrine of *shirk*, even though they appeared to be deeply involved in it. This is amply supported by their history. For instance, when Abraha invaded Makkah, the Quraish did not invoke their idols to save the Ka‘bah from him, but they begged Allah to save it. Their contemporary poetry bears sufficient evidence that they regarded the destruction of the “people of the elephant” due to Allah’s power and supernatural interference and not due to any help of their idols. The Quraish and the polytheists of Arabia had also come to know that when Abraha reached Ṭā‘if on his way to Makkah, the people of Ṭā‘if had offered him their services to destroy the Ka‘bah and had even provided him guides to take him safely to Makkah through the hills, for fear that he might also destroy the temple of “Lāt”, their chief deity. This event so much offended the Arabs that for years after this they continued pelting the grave of the chief guide with stones for retaliation. Moreover, the Quraish and the other Arabs attributed their creed to Prophet Abraham and looked upon their religious and social customs and their Hajj rites as part of Abraham’s religion. They knew that Prophet Abraham was a worshipper of Allah and not of idols. They also had traditions to show as to when they had started idol-worship, and which idol had been brought from where, when and by whom. The fact is that the common Arab did not have much of reverence for his idols. He would even speak insultingly of it and withheld his offerings when it failed to fulfil his wishes and prayers. For instance, there is the story of an Arab who wanted to avenge the murder of his father. He went to the temple of his idol, Zul-Khalaṣah, and wanted to take an omen. The response came that he should abandon his intention. At this the Arab became furious and cried out: “O Zul-Khalaṣah! Had you been in my place, and your father was murdered, you would not have said that the murderers should not be punished.” Another Arab took his

herd of camels to the shrine of his god, named Sa'd, for seeking its blessings. It was a tall idol which had been smeared with sacrificial blood. On seeing it, the camels became terrified and started running in all directions. The Arab was so filled with rage that he started pelting the idol with stones, shouting, "May God destroy you! I had come to you to seek blessings for my camels, but you have deprived me of all of them." There were certain idols about whose origin filthy stories were current. For instance, the story about Asāf and Nā'ilah whose images had been placed at Şifā and Marwa, was that they were actually a man and a woman, who had committed adultery inside the Holy Ka'bah and had been turned into stone by God as a punishment. When the deities had such reputation, no worshipper could cherish any reverence for them in his heart. From this one can easily understand that the Arabs did recognize the value of true God-worship deep in their hearts, but, on the one hand, it had been suppressed by ancient customs and ways of ignorance, and on the other, the priestly class among the Quraish had vested interests, who were busy creating prejudices against it among the people. They could not give up idol-worship because such a step would have brought to an end their supremacy in Arabia. That is why, refraining from *shirk* and worship of One Allah has been mentioned as a mark of superiority of the followers of the Holy Prophet without any fear of contradiction by the disbelievers, for even they in their heart of hearts knew that it was a weighty argument against them.

85. This can have two meanings : (1) His punishment will never come to an end, but it will continue being inflicted relentlessly over and over again; and (2) the person who in addition to the sins of disbelief, *shirk* and atheism, would have committed murders, adultery and other sins, will get separate punishment for rebellion and for each other sin. He will be accountable for each of his major and minor sins none of which will be pardoned. For instance, for each murder and for each act of adultery he will be given a separate punishment, and likewise, there will be a separate punishment for every sin committed by him.

85. This is a good news for those people who repented and reformed themselves, for they will have the benefit of the "general amnesty" contained in verse 70. This was regarded as a great blessing by the true servants because very few of those who embraced Islam had been free from those vices during their 'ignorance', and were terrified by the threat contained in vv. 68-69, but this amnesty not only redeemed them but filled them with hope.

Many instances of such people, who sincerely repented and reformed their lives, have been related in the traditions. For instance, Ibn Jarīr and Ṭabarānī have related an incident from Hadrat Abū Ḥurairah, who

says, "One day when I returned home after offering the 'Ishā prayer in the Prophet's Mosque, I saw a woman standing at my door. I saluted her and walked into my room, closed the door and busied myself in voluntary worship. After a while she knocked at the door. I opened the door and asked what she wanted. She said that she had come with a problem: She had committed *zinā*, had become pregnant, given birth to a child and then killed it. She wanted to know if there was any chance of her sin being forgiven. I replied in the negative. She went back grief-stricken, exclaiming, "Ah! this beautiful body was created for the fire!" The next morning, after the prayer, when I related the night's incident before the Holy Prophet, he said, "You gave a very wrong answer, Abū Hurairah: Haven't you read the Quranic verse which says: '(Those) who do not invoke any other deity than Allah...except the one who may have repented (after those sins) and have believed and done righteous deeds'?" Hearing this from the Holy Prophet, I went out in search of the woman, and had her traced again at the 'Ishā time. I gave her the good news and told her what the Holy Prophet had said in reply to her question. She immediately fell prostrate on the ground and thanked Allah, Who had opened a way for her forgiveness. Then she offered repentance and set a slave-girl, along with her son, free." A similar incident about an old man has been related in the Traditions. He came before the Holy Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah, all my life has passed in sin: there is no sin which I have not committed; so much so that if my sins were to be distributed over the people of the whole world, they would all be doomed. Is there any way out for my forgiveness?" The Holy Prophet asked him, "Have you embraced Islam?" He said, "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah." The Holy Prophet said, "Go back, Allah is All-Forgiving and has the power to change your evil deeds into good deeds." He asked, "Is it about all my crimes and errors?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Yes, it is about all your crimes and errors." (Ibn Kathīr).

87. It has two meanings: (1) When he has repented sincerely, he will start a new life of belief and obedience to Allah and by His grace and help will start doing good deeds instead of evil deeds that he used to do in his life of unbelief, and his evil deeds will be replaced by good deeds; and (2) Not only will his evil deeds done in the past be written off, but it will also be recorded in his conduct register that he was the servant who gave up rebellion against his Lord and adopted the way of His obedience. Then, as he will feel more and more sorry for his past sins and offer repentance, more and more good deeds will be credited to him; for repenting of one's wrong doing and seeking

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بِأَيْتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ
 لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ
 يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا تَحِيَّةً وَسَلَامًا ۗ خُلِدِينَ فِيهَا
 حَسَنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ۗ قُلْ مَا يَعْبُؤُكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ
 كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا ۗ

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74-76

who pray, "Our Lord, bless us with wives and children, who may be the comfort of our eyes⁹², and make us leaders of the righteous."⁹³—Such are the people who will be rewarded with high palaces for their fortitude,^{94,95} wherein they will be welcomed with due respect, honour and salutations and wherein they will live for ever: what an excellent abode and what an excellent resting place!

77

O Muḥammad, Tell the people, "My Lord does not care at all if you do not invoke Him.⁹⁶ Now that you have denied (His Revelations), you will soon be awarded such a punishment which you will never be able to avoid."

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forgiveness is in itself a good deed. Thus, good deeds will supersede all his evil deeds in his conduct register, and he will not only escape punishment in the Hereafter but, in addition, he will also be blessed with high favours by Allah.

88. That is, ultimately everyone has to return to Allah for Allah alone is man's last and real refuge: He alone can reward one for his good deeds or punish one for his evil deeds: He alone is All-Merciful and All-Compassionate, Who receives the penitent with forgiveness and Who does not rebuke him for his past errors provided that he has repented sincerely, and adopted the right attitude and reformed himself.

89. This also has two meanings: (1) They do not give evidence (in a law court etc.) in regard to a false thing in order to prove it right, when in fact it is a falsehood, or at best a doubtful thing; and (2) they have no intention to witness any thing which is false, evil or wicked as spectators. In this sense, every sin and every indecency, every sham and counterfeit act is a falsehood. A true servant of Allah recognizes it as false and shuns it even if it is presented in the seemingly beautiful forms of "art",

90. The Arabic word *laghv* implies all that is vain, useless and meaningless and it also covers "falsehood". The true servants pass by in a dignified manner if ever they come across "what is vain", as if it were a heap of filth. They do not tarry there to enjoy the "filth" of moral impurity, obscenity or foul language, nor do they intentionally go anywhere to hear or see or take part in any sort of "filth". For further details, see E.N. 4 of Al-Mu'minūn.

91. The true servants of Allah do not behave like the blind and the deaf towards the Revelations of Allah, when they are recited to them for their admonition. They do not turn a deaf ear to their teachings and Message and do not deliberately close their eyes to the Signs that they are asked to observe, but are deeply moved by them. They follow and practise what they are enjoined and refrain from what is forbidden.

92. The most distinctive characteristic of the true servants is their eagerness for prayer to Allah. In verse 65 their "prayer" for their own salvation and in verse 74 their prayer for their wives and children have been cited: "Our Lord, make our wives and children true believers so that they should practise righteousness and become a source of comfort for us." Their prayer shows that the true servants of Allah are more concerned about the salvation of their beloved ones in the Hereafter than the enjoyment of the world.

It should be noted that this characteristic has been cited here to show that the true servants had sincerely believed in the Message. That is why they were so concerned about the "Faith" of their beloved ones. It should also be kept in mind that many of the near and dear ones of the Believers had not as yet embraced Islam. If a husband had embraced Islam, the wife was still an unbeliever, and if a youth had accepted Islam, his parents and brothers and sisters were still involved in disbelief, and *vice versa*. Therefore, the true servants wept and prayed for them, whenever the picture of their horrible state in Hell came before their mind's eyes.

93. That is, "We should excel in piety, righteousness and good works; nay, we should become the leaders of the pious people so that we may lead them in the propagation of virtue and piety in the world." Incidentally, this characteristic of the true servants was in great contrast to that of the disbelievers, who strove in competition and rivalry with one another for superiority in worldly power and wealth. But it is a pity that some people in our time have misinterpreted this verse as containing sanction for seeking candidature for political leadership. According to them, the verse means: "Our Lord, make us rulers over the pious people."

94. The word *ṣabr* (fortitude) has been used here in its most

comprehensive sense. The true servants courageously endured their persecution by the enemies of the Truth; they remained firm and steadfast in their struggle to establish Allah's way in the land; they carried out their duties enjoined by Allah sincerely and fearlessly without any concern for the worldly losses and deprivation; and they withstood all temptations held out by Satan and all the lusts of the flesh.

95. "*Ghurfaḥ*" is a high mansion and the word is generally used for the "upper chamber" of a double-storeyed house. But the reality is that the highest buildings made by man in this world, even the Taj Mahal of India and the sky-scrapers of New York, are an ugly imitation of the "excellent abodes" in Paradise. They are so magnificent, grand and beautiful that human imagination cannot form any picture of their grandeur.

96. This warning to the disbelievers has been given in order to contrast it with the great rewards that have been promised to the true servants of Allah, as if to say, "If you do not invoke Allah for help and protection, and do not worship Him, you will have no value and importance in His sight, and He will not care at all for you because He does not stand in need of any help from you. It is indeed for your own sake that He has given you the opportunity to invoke Him so that He may turn in mercy towards you; otherwise there is no difference between you and the rest of creation."

XXVI

ASH-SHU'ARĀA' الشُّعْرَاءُ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

XXVI

ASH-SHU'ARĀA' الشعراء

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from verse 224 in which the word *Ash-Shu'arāa'* occurs.

Period of Revelation

The subject-matter and the style show, and the traditions confirm, that it was revealed during the middle Makkan period. According to Ibn 'Abbās, Sūrah Ṭā Hā was revealed first, then Sūrah Al-Wāqi'ah, and then Sūrah Ash-Shu'arāa'. (*Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī*, Vol. XIX, p. 64). About Sūrah Ṭā Hā it is well known that it had been revealed before Ḥaḍrat 'Umar embraced Islam.

Subject-Matter and Topics

The background of the Sūrah is that the disbelievers of Makkah were persistently refusing, on one pretext or the other, to accept the message of Islam given by the Holy Prophet. Sometimes they would say that he did not show them any sign to convince them of his Prophethood ; sometimes they would brand him as a poet or a sorcerer and mock his message; and sometimes they would ridicule his Mission, saying that his followers were either a few foolish youth, or the poor people and slaves—whereas, they argued, if his Mission had really some value for the people, the nobles and the elders would have accepted it first. Thus, while

on the one hand, the Holy Prophet was becoming wearied by his efforts to show them rationally the errors of their creeds and prove the truth of the Doctrines of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter, the disbelievers, on the other, were never tired of adopting one kind of obduracy after the other. This state of affairs was causing great anguish and grief to the Holy Prophet.

Such were the conditions when this Sūrah was revealed. It begins with words of consolation to the Holy Prophet, implying, "Why do you fret for their sake? If these people have not believed in you, it is not because they have not seen any Sign, but because they are obdurate. They will not listen to reason ; they want to see a Sign which makes them bow their heads in humility. When this Sign is shown in due course of time, they will themselves realize that what was being presented to them was the Truth."

After this introduction, till verse 191, one and the same theme has been presented continuously, and it is said: "The whole earth abounds in such Signs as can guide a seeker after truth to Reality," but the stubborn and misguided people have never believed even after seeing the Signs, whether these were the Signs of the natural phenomena or the miracles of the Prophets. These wretched people have stubbornly adhered to their erroneous creeds till the Divine scourge actually overtook them." It is to illustrate this that the history of seven of the ancient tribes has been told, who persisted in disbelief just like the disbelievers of Makkah. In this connection, the following points have been stressed:

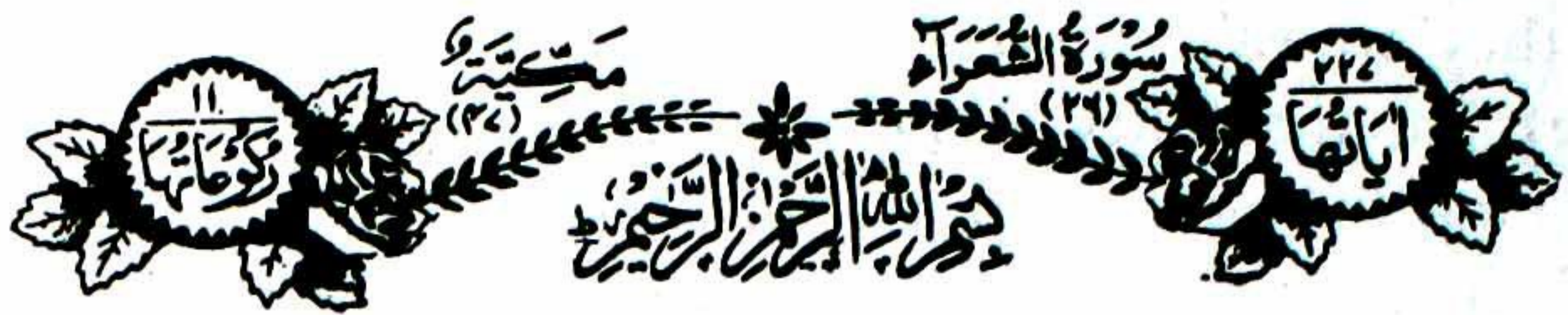
(1) The Signs are of two kinds: (a) Those which are scattered all over the earth, and by seeing which an intelligent person can judge for himself whether what the Prophet is presenting is the Truth or not ; and (b) those which were seen by Pharaoh and his people, Noah's people, the 'Ād and the Thamūd, Lot's people and the people of Aiykah.

Now it is for the disbelievers to decide which kind of the Signs they are eager to see.

(2) The mentality of the disbelievers has been the same throughout the ages; their arguments and their objections, and their excuses and subterfuges for not believing have been similar and ultimately the fates that they met have also been the same. Likewise, the Prophets in every age presented the same teachings, their personal character and their reasoning and arguments against their opponents were the same, and they were all similarly blessed with mercy by Allah Almighty. Both these patterns of behaviour and conduct are found in history, and the disbelievers could themselves see as to which respective patterns they and the Holy Prophet belonged.

(3) Allah is All-Mighty, All-Powerful and All-Merciful at the same time. History contains instances of His Wrath as well as of His Mercy. Now, therefore, it is for the people to decide whether they would like to deserve Allah's Mercy or His Wrath.

(4) Lastly, the discussion has been summed up, saying : "O disbelievers, if at all you want to see the Signs, why should you insist on seeing those horrible Signs that visited the doomed communities of the past? Why don't you see the Qur'ān which is being presented in your own language? Why don't you see Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and mercy) and his Companions? Can the revelations of the Qur'ān be the work of a satan or a jinn? Does the recipient of the Qur'ān appear to be a sorcerer? Are Muḥammad and his Companions no different from a poet and his admirers? Why don't you give up disbelief and search your hearts for their judgment? When in the heart of your hearts you yourselves believe that the Revelations of the Qur'ān have nothing in common with sorcery and poetry, then you should know that you are being cruel and unjust, and will certainly meet the doom meant for the cruel and unjust."



طَسَّوْهُ تِلْكَ آيَةُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ۝ لَعَلَّكَ بَآخِرَ نَفْسِكَ الْآيُكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝
 إِنْ نَشَأْ نُزِّلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ ۝ وَمَا
 يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ مُحَدِّثٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ ۝ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا
 فَسَيَاتِرِهِمْ أَتَبُوا مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ۝ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَبْتَنَّا فِيهَا
 مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ۝ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ وَ
 إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَإِذْ نَادَى رَبُّكَ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَنْتَ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝
 قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ لَا يَتَّقُونَ ۝ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ۝ وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي
 وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَىٰ هَارُونَ ۝ وَكَهْنُ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ۝
 قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَادْخُلَا بَابِنَا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ ۝ فَارْتَبَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقَوْلَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ
 رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ أَنْ أَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۝ قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَ
 لَبَّيْتُ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ ۝ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ
 الْكٰفِرِينَ ۝ قَالَ فَعَلْتَهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الصَّالِينَ ۝ فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ

XXVI

ASH-SHU'ARĀA' الشُّعْرَاءُ

Verses: 227

Revealed at Makkah

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

Tā Sīn Mīm. These are the verses of the lucid Book.¹ 1-2

O Muḥammad, you will perhaps consume yourself with grief because these people do not believe.² If We will, We can send down from the sky a Sign before which they will bend down their necks in submission.³ Whatever new admonition comes to them from the Merciful, they turn away from it. Now that they have rejected it, they will soon come to know (in various forms) the reality of what they have been mocking⁴. 3-6

And have they never looked at the earth (and seen) how We have created in it a variety of fine vegetation in abundance? This surely has a Sign,⁵ but most of them would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful.⁶ 7-9

Relate to them the story of the time when your Lord called Moses,⁷ saying: "Go forth to the wicked people—the people of Pharaoh.⁸ Do they not fear?"⁹ Moses answered, "My Lord, I am afraid that they will treat me as a liar. My breast straitens and I am not eloquent of tongue: so appoint Aaron to Prophethood.¹⁰ And they have the charge of a crime against me, too; therefore, I fear that they will put me to death."¹¹ Allah said: "No, never! Go, both of you, with Our Signs:¹² We shall be with you, hearing everything. Go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'We have been sent by the Lord of all Creation (with the message) that you should let the Israelites go with us'.¹³" 10-17

Pharaoh said, "Did we not bring you up as a child in 18-19

our house?¹⁴ You lived quite a few years of your life among us, and then you did what you did:¹⁵ you are indeed an ungrateful man.”

20-21

Moses answered, “I did it inadvertently;¹⁶ then I fled from you out of fear; then my Lord bestowed wisdom and knowledge upon me,¹⁷ and included me among the Messengers.

1. That is, the verses being presented in this Sūrah are of that Book, which presents and explains its subject-matter clearly and plainly so that every reader and listener may easily understand what it invites to, what it enjoins and what it forbids, and what it regards as true and what as false. To believe or not to believe is a different matter; but no one can have the excuse that he could not understand the teachings of the Book and its injunctions and prohibitions.

“*Al-Kitāb-ul-Mubīn*” also has the meaning that the Qur'ān is, beyond any doubt, a Divine Book. Its language, its diction and themes, the facts presented by it and the background of its revelations, all testify to the fact that this is indeed the Book of the Master of all Creation. In this sense, its every sentence is a Sign and a miracle. As such, any person who has common sense has no need of any other Sign than the verses of this Book for believing in the Prophethood of Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings).

This brief introductory sentence, which covers both these meanings, has a close connection with the subject-matter of this Sūrah. The disbelievers of Makkah demanded a miracle from the Holy Prophet so as to be convinced that the message he gave was really from Allah. In answer to that, it has been said that if some one really wanted a Sign for believing in the Prophet, he should study the verses of this Book. Then, the disbelievers accused the Holy Prophet of being a sorcerer. This charge has been refuted by saying that the Qur'ān has nothing ambiguous or mysterious in it; but it plainly puts forward all its teachings which cannot be the creation of a poet or a sorcerer's imagination.

2. The words *bākhī 'un-nafsaka* literally mean: “You would kill yourself.” The verse in fact describes the extreme anguish, anxiety and grief of the Holy Prophet over the Makkan disbelievers' ways of deviation, moral degradation, and obduracy and opposition to his message of reform. Sometimes it seemed as if his grief and mental suffering for their sake would cause his death. This state of the Holy Prophet has been referred to at other places in the Qur'ān as

well, for instance in Al-Kahf : 6, thus : "Well, O Muḥammad, it may be that you will consume your life for their sake out of sorrow if they do not believe in this message." And in Al-Fāṭir: 8, thus : "... let not your life be consumed in grief for their sake."

3. That is, "It is not at all difficult for Allah to send down a Sign which would make all the disbelievers yield and submit. If, however, He does not send one, it does not mean that such a thing is beyond His powers, but the reason is that belief under compulsion is not acceptable to Him. Allah wants that people should use their common-sense and recognize the Truth through the verses of the Divine Book and the Signs which are scattered all over the universe and are found even in their own selves. Then, when their hearts are satisfied that the message of the Prophets contains the Truth, and the beliefs and the creeds which are opposed to it, are false, they should willingly give up falsehood and adopt the Truth. This voluntary belief, acceptance of the Truth and rejection of falsehood, is what Allah demands from man. It is for this reason that Allah has bestowed upon man choice and free will, and freedom to follow any way, right or wrong, that he pleases. For the same reason He has placed in his nature both the tendencies, towards good and towards evil, and opened up before him both the ways, to piety and to sin. For the same purpose He has given Satan the freedom and respite to mislead him, and has made arrangements of Prophethood, Revelation and invitation to goodness to guide him to the right way, and has placed man on trial to see whether he adopts the way of belief and obedience or of disbelief and sin. On the other hand, if Allah had adopted a method of coercing people to believe and obey, it would have defeated the very purpose of the trial and test. Then there was no need to send down the Signs for the purpose, but He would have created man with a pure nature, without any inclination for evil, disbelief and sin, and made him obedient by birth like the angels. This has been referred at several places in the Qur'ān, for instance in Yūnus: 99: "Had your Lord willed all the dwellers of the earth would have believed in Him;" and in Hūd: 118: "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)." For further explanation, see E.N.'s 101,102 of Yūnus and E.N. 116 of Hūd.

4. That is, the people who show lack of feeling and interest for every rational attempt made to bring them to the right way, cannot be made to believe forcibly by sending down Signs from heaven. They

only deserve to be shown their evil end after they have been duly warned and shown guidance, which they not only treated with indifference but rejected scornfully. This evil end can be shown to them in several ways:

(1) The Truth which they have bitterly opposed and scoffed at should prevail in the world in front of their very eyes in spite of their antagonism. (2) They should be visited by a painful torment and eliminated from the world. (3) After a few years of misguided life they should meet death and see for themselves that what they had been following wholeheartedly throughout their lives was nothing but falsehood and what the Prophets had been presenting was the very Truth, which they had been scoffing at. Thus the evil end can take place differently for different people as it happened in the past.

5. That is, the seeker after truth does not have to look far for a Sign. If only he sees with open eyes the phenomena of vegetation around him, he will be able to judge for himself whether the reality about the system of the world (*i.e.*, *Tauhid*) which was being presented by the Prophets is true, or the speculations of the polytheists and atheists. From the variety and abundance of creation found on the earth, the various elements and factors supporting it, the laws of nature causing it to grow and flourish, and the accord and harmony existing between its characteristics and the countless needs and demands of innumerable creatures, only a fool will conclude that all this is happening automatically without the wisdom, knowledge, power and design of an All-Mighty, All-Powerful Creator. Obviously, many masters and gods could not have by any device arranged and produced the perfect harmony and accord between the soil, the sun and the moon, and the animal and plant life produced with their help and the needs of a great variety of creatures living on the earth. A sensible person, unless he is prejudiced and biased, cannot help feeling convinced that these are the clear signs and proofs of the existence of One God, and there is no further need of a miracle to convince him of the reality of *Tauhid*.

6. That is, "He has the power and ability to annihilate completely anyone whom He wills to punish, but it is His mercy that He does not hasten to punish the wrong-doer, but gives him respite for years and centuries to allow him time to think, understand and mend his ways, and is ever ready to forgive the sins of a lifetime if the sinner offers repentance but once."

7. After a brief introduction, historical events have been presented beginning with the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh, and attention has been drawn specifically to the following points:

(1) The conditions under which Prophet Moses had to work were much harsher and more severe than those faced by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him). Prophet Moses belonged to a slave community very much suppressed by Pharaoh and his people. In contrast to them, the Holy Prophet was a member of the clan of Quraish and his family enjoyed an equal status with the other clans. Then Prophet Moses had been bred and brought up in the house of Pharaoh and after remaining a fugitive for ten years due to a charge of murder, he was commanded to go before the same king from whom he had fled for life. The Holy Prophet did not have to face any such situation. Then the empire of Pharaoh was the most extensive and powerful empire of the time and the meagre power of the Quraish had no comparison with it. In spite of that Pharaoh could not do any harm to Prophet Moses and ultimately perished in the conflict. From this Allah wanted the Quraish to learn this lesson: "None can defeat the one who has Allah to help him? When Pharaoh with all his might became helpless against Moses, how can you, O poor Quraish, succeed against Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings)?"

(2) There could not be clearer and more manifest Signs (miracles) than those which were shown to Pharaoh through Moses. Then in an open contest with the magicians before a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people to meet the challenge of Pharaoh himself, it had been conclusively demonstrated that what was presented by Moses, was not magic. The skilful magicians who were themselves Egyptians and had been summoned by Pharaoh himself bore witness to the fact that turning of Moses' staff into a serpent was a real change of nature, which could only happen through a Divine miracle, and not by any trick of magic. Then the magicians' believing in Moses immediately, even at the risk of life, proved beyond any doubt that the Sign presented by Moses was a miracle and not magic. Yet the disbelievers were not inclined to believe in the Prophet. Now how can you, O Quraish, say that you will believe only when you are shown a perceptible miracle and a physical Sign? As a matter of fact, if a person is free from prejudice, false sense of prestige and vested interest, and has an open mind to appreciate the distinction between truth and falsehood, and is prepared to give up falsehood for the truth, he does not stand in need of any other signs than those found in this Book, in the life of the one presenting it and in the vast universe around him. On the contrary, an obstinate person, who is not interested in the truth, and who because of selfish motives is determined not to recognize and accept any such truth as may clash with his interests, will not be prepared to believe after

seeing any sign whatever, even if the earth and the heaven are turned upside down in front of his eyes.

(3) The tragic end of such obstinacy as met by Pharaoh is not something for which other people should become so impatient. Those who do not believe even after seeing with their own eyes the Signs of Divine power have inevitably to meet a similar fate. Therefore, instead of learning a lesson why do you insist on seeing such a dreadful sign? For comparison, see Al-A'rāf: 103-137, Yūnus: 75-92, Banī Isra'il: 101-104, and Ṭā Hā: 9-79.

8. The epithet of "the wicked people" describes the extremely wicked character of the people of Pharaoh.

9. That is, "O Moses! Just see how these people are perpetrating crime and injustice presuming that they are all-powerful in the land having no fear of God, Who will call them to account in the Hereafter"

10. The sentence, "My breast straitens", shows that Prophet Moses was somewhat hesitant of going alone on such a difficult mission, and also had the feeling that he was not eloquent in speech. That is why he begged Allah to appoint Aaron too, as messenger to assist him who, being more vigorous in speech, could support and strengthen him as and when the need arose. It is just possible that in the beginning, the Prophet Moses might have begged that Aaron be appointed to Prophethood instead of him, but later when he felt that Allah willed him to be appointed to that position, he might have appealed that Aaron should at least be made his counsellor and assistant? We say this because here Prophet Moses is not praying for Aaron to be made his counsellor, but says, "Appoint Aaron to Prophethood." On the other hand, in Sūrah Ṭā Hā, he says, "Appoint for me a counsellor from my family—(let it be) my brother Aaron." Then in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, he says, "My brother Aaron is more vigorous in speech than myself, so send him as an assistant with me to confirm (and support) me." From this it appears that these two requests were made later, but originally Prophet Moses had begged Allah to appoint Aaron to Prophethood instead of himself.

The Bible has a different story to tell. According to it, Prophet Moses, fearing that he would be rejected by the people of Pharaoh, and putting forward the excuse of his faltering speech, had declined to accept his appointment to prophethood on the pretext that he lacked vigour and eloquence in speech : "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of *him whom* thou wilt send." (Exodus, 4 : 13), Then Allah, of His own will, appointed Aaron to be his assistant and persuaded them to go together before Pharaoh. (Exodus, 4 : 1-13). For further

details, see E.N. 19 of Ṭā Hā.

11. The allusion is to the incident of Prophet Moses' giving a blow to an Egyptian, who was fighting with an Israelite, and thus causing his death. Then as soon as Moses came to know that the report had reached Pharaoh and his people and they were planning to take revenge, he fled the country and took refuge in Midian. (See Al-Qaṣaṣ : 15-21). Now when after a period of almost ten years of hiding he was suddenly called upon and commanded to go before Pharaoh, who had already a charge of murder against him, with the message, Prophet Moses rightly felt apprehensive that he would immediately be involved in the murder case even before he was able to convey the message as commanded by Allah.

12. Here by "Signs" are meant the miracles of the staff and the shining hand, which were given to Moses. For details see Al-A'rāf : 106-117, Ṭā Hā : 17-23, An-Naml : 7-14, and Al-Qaṣaṣ : 31-32).

13. The Mission of the Prophete Moses and Aaron was twofold: First, to invite Pharaoh to the worship and obedience of Allah which has been the foremost aim of the Mission of every Prophet, and secondly, to liberate the Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh, which was specifically assigned to them. The Qur'ān has mentioned sometimes only the first part of their Mission (as in Sūrah An-Nāzi'āt) and sometimes only the second.

14. This remark of Pharaoh shows that he was not the same Pharaoh who had bought up Moses in his house, but his son. Had he been the same Pharaoh, he would have said, "I brought you up." But, on the contrary, he says, "You were brought up among ourselves." For a detailed discussion, see E.N.'s 85-93 of Al-A'rāf.

15. The allusion is to the incident of murder committed by Moses accidentally.

16. The word *dālālat* does not always mean "straying away", but it is also used in the sense of ignorance, folly, error, forgetfulness, inadvertence, etc. As mentioned in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, Prophet Moses had only given a blow to the Egyptian (Copt) when he saw him treating an Israelite cruelly. A blow does not cause death, nor is it given with the intention of causing death. It was only an accident that the Egyptian died. As such, it was not a case of deliberate murder but of accidental murder. A murder was committed but not intentionally, nor was any weapon used, which is usually employed for murder, or which can cause murder.

17. The word *ḥikm* means wisdom, knowledge or authority, which is granted by Allah to a Prophet so that he may speak with confidence and power.

فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ
 عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْمِعُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ
 رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٢٧﴾
 قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالَ لِمَنِ اتَّخَذتَ
 إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ السَّجُونِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالَ أَوْلَوْجِنَّتِكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالَ
 فَاتِّبِعْهُ إِنَّ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَالْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَ
 نَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بِيضَاءٌ لِلنَّظِيرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَ لِلْمَلَأِ حَوْلَهُ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾
 يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ
 وَابْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ يَا تَأُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَابٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ
 لِيَلْقَا يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَعَلَّنَا نَبْهَرُ السَّحَرَةَ
 إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَإِنَّا لَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ
 نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤١﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَى
 الْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُتْلِقُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَالْقُوا جِبَالَهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ وَقَالُوا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ
 إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَالْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾
 فَالْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَجْدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾
 قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنِ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرِكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ
 فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ هُ لَا يَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا يَصِلبَكُمْ
 أَجْعِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا

As for the favour of which you have reminded me, the fact is that you had reduced the Israelites to bondsmen."¹⁸ 22

Pharaoh said,¹⁹ "And what is this Lord of all Creation?"²⁰ 23

Moses answered, "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them, if only you care to believe!"²¹ 24

Pharaoh said to those around him, "Do you hear?" 25

Moses said, "Your Lord as well as Lord of your forefathers who have gone before."²² 26

Pharaoh said (to all those present), "This messenger of yours, who has been sent to you, seems to be utterly mad." 27

Moses said, "(He is) Lord of the east and the west and of all that is between them, if only you people have any common-sense!"²³ 28

Pharaoh said, "If you take any one other than me as a deity, I will cast you among those who are rotting in the prisons."²⁴ 29

Moses said, "Even if I bring forth a convincing thing?"²⁵ 30

Pharaoh replied, "Well, bring it if you are truthful."²⁶ 31

(No sooner had he uttered these words than) Moses cast down his staff, and suddenly it became a serpent.²⁷ 32-33
Then he drew out his hand (from the armpit) and it was shining bright for all the spectators.²⁸

Pharaoh said to the chiefs around him, "This fellow is certainly a skilled magician: he wants to drive you out of your land by means of his magic.²⁹ Now, what is your command?"³⁰ 34-35

They said, "Detain him and his brother for a while, and send forth heralds to the cities to summon every skilled magician into your presence." 36-37

So, the magicians were gathered together on an appointed day and time,³¹ and the people were asked, "Would you come to the gathering?"³² We may perhaps 38-40

still follow the magicians' way if they are dominant."³³

41 When the magicians arrived for the contest, they said to Pharaoh, "Shall we have rewards if we win?"³⁴

42 He replied, "Of course, and then you will be included among those nearest to me."³⁵

43 Moses said, "Cast down what you have to cast down."

44-48 They forthwith cast down their cords and staffs and said, "By Pharaoh's honour, we shall surely win."³⁶ Then Moses cast down his staff, and lo ! it started devouring up their false devices. At this, all the magicians fell down in prostration, and cried out, "We have believed in the Lord of all creation the Lord of Moses and Aaron !"³⁷

49 Pharaoh said, "You have believed in Moses even before I should have permitted you ! He must be your chief who has taught you magic.³⁸ Well, you shall soon come to know : I shall have your hands and feet cut off on opposite sides and shall crucify you all."³⁹

50-51 They replied, "We care not : we shall pass into our Lord's presence, and we expect that our Lord will forgive us our sins because we are the first to believe."⁴⁰

18. That is, "If you had not been unjust and cruel to the Israelites, I should not have been brought to your house for upbringing. It was only on account of your barbarism that my mother put me in a basket and cast it into the river. Had it not been so, I should have been happily brought up in my own house. Therefore, it does not behove you to remind me of your favour of bringing me up in your house."

19. Here the details that Prophet Moses went before Pharaoh as the Messenger of the Lord of the universe and conveyed to him His message, have been omitted, and only the conversation that took place between them has been related.

20. This question of Pharaoh concerned the assertion of Moses that he had been sent by the Lord, Master and Ruler of all Creation with the message that he should let the Israelites go with him. This was a political message. It implied that the One, Whom Moses claimed to represent, possessed authority and sovereign rights over all the people of the world including Pharaoh and that he was not only encroaching upon his sphere of sovereignty as Supreme Ruler, but was also sending him the Command that he should hand over a

section of his subjects to the representative appointed by Him, so that he should take them out of his kingdom. That is why Pharaoh asked, "Who is this Master and Ruler of all Creation who is sending such a command to the king of Egypt through an ordinary subject of his kingdom?"

21. That is, "I have not been sent by any mortal king ruling in the world, but I come from Him Who is the Owner of the heavens and the earth. If you believe that there is a Creator and Master and Ruler of this universe, it should not be difficult for you to understand who is the Lord of all Creation."

22. These words were addressed to the chiefs of Pharaoh, whom he had asked, "Do you hear?" Prophet Moses said: "I do not believe in the false gods who exist today, but did not exist yesterday, or who existed yesterday but do not exist today. This Pharaoh, whom you worship as your lord today, did not exist yesterday, and the Pharaohs whom your elders worshipped yesterday, do not exist today; whereas I believe in the sovereignty and authority of that Lord Who is both your Lord and Pharaoh's Lord as much today as He was your elders' Lord before this."

23. That is, "You regard me as a mad person, but if you think you are wise people, you should yourself decide as to who is the real lord: this wretched Pharaoh who is ruling over a small piece of earth, or He Who is the Owner of the east and the west and of everything bounded by the east and the west including the land of Egypt. I believe in His sovereignty alone and have been sent to convey His message to a creature of His."

24. To understand and appreciate this conversation fully, one should bear in mind the fact that as it is today, in the ancient times too, the concept of "deity" was confined to its religious sense only. The deity was meant to be worshipped and presented offerings and gifts, and because of its "supernatural powers" and authority the people were to pray to it for help and fulfillment of their desires. But a deity's being supreme legally and politically also and his right to enjoin anything he pleased in the mundane affairs and man's duty to submit to his commands as to superior law, has never been recognized by the so-called worldly rulers. They have always claimed that in the mundane affairs, they alone possess absolute authority and no deity has any right to interfere in the polity and law prescribed by them. This very thing has been the real cause of the conflict between the Prophets and their righteous followers, on the one hand, and the worldly kingdoms and governments on the other. The Prophets have been trying their utmost to make the worldly rulers acknowledge the sovereign and absolute rights of the Lord of the Worlds, but they in return have not only

been claiming sovereign powers and rights for themselves, but have been considering every such person as a criminal and rebel, who has held someone else as a deity in the political and legal sphere. With this background one can easily understand the real significance of Pharaoh's words. Had it been a question of mere worship and offerings, he would have least bothered that Moses, forsaking all gods, regarded only Allah, the Lord of all Creation, as worthy of those rights. If Moses had invited him to serve Allah alone, he would not have felt provoked and offended. At the most he would have refused to give up the creed of his forefathers, or would have challenged Moses to have a debate with his own religious scholars. But what caused him provocation was this that Prophet Moses was presenting himself as the representative of the Lord of all Creation and was conveying to him a political command as if he was a subordinate ruler and the representative of the superior authority was demanding obedience from him to the command. In this sense, he was not prepared to acknowledge any other political or legal authority, nor allow any of his subjects to acknowledge anybody instead of himself as the supreme ruler. That is why he challenged the term "Lord of all Creation", for the message sent by Him clearly reflected sovereignty in the political and not in the mere religious sense. Then, when Prophet Moses explained over and over again what he meant by the "Lord of all Creation", Pharaoh threatened that if he held any one other than him as sovereign in the land of Egypt, he would be cast into prison.

25. That is, "Will you still deny me and send me to prison, even if I present a convincing Sign to prove that I am really the Messenger of God, Who is Lord of all Creation, Lord of the heavens and the earth and Lord of the east and the west?"

26. This reply of Pharaoh shows that he was not in any way different from the common polytheists of the ancient and modern times. Like all other polytheists he believed in Allah's being the highest Deity in the supernatural sense. Who wielded greater power and authority than all other gods and goddesses. That is why Prophet Moses said to him, "If you do not believe that I have been appointed by Allah, I can present such clear Signs as will prove that I have really been sent by Him", and that is why Pharaoh said, "If you are true in your claim, come out with your Sign", otherwise if he had any doubt about the existence of Allah or His being Master of the universe, he would not have asked for the Sign.

27. *Thu'bān* means a serpent. At other places, the Qur'ān has used *ḥayyatun* (snake) and *jānn* (a small snake) to describe the snake of the staff. The interpretation given by Imām Rāzī is that the snake of

the staff looked like a serpent from its big size and has been called *jāānn* on account of its swift movement which is characteristic of small snakes.

28. Some commentators under the influence of the Israelite traditions have translated *baidā'* as white and have taken it to mean that the healthy hand when drawn out of the armpit became white as if struck by leprosy. But commentators like Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Abul Sa'ūd 'Imādī, Ālūsī and others are agreed that *baidā'* here means shining and bright. As soon as Prophet Moses took out his hand from the armpit, it made the whole place bright as if by the sun. For further explanation, see E.N. 13 of *Ṭā Hā*.

29. The impact of the two miracles can be judged from the fact that a moment before this Pharaoh was calling Moses a mad man, because he had claimed to be a Prophet and had had the boldness to openly demand release of the Israelites. He was also threatening Moses that if he took somebody else as Lord instead of him, he would cast him into the prison for life. But, after he had seen the Signs, he became so terror-stricken that he felt his kingdom to be at stake, and in his confusion he did not realize that he was talking meaninglessly to his servants in the court. Two men from the oppressed community of the Israelites were standing before the most powerful ruler of the time : they had no military force with them, they belonged to a weak and lifeless community, and there was no sign of any rebellion in any corner of the country, nor did they have the support of any foreign power, yet as soon as the miracles of the snake of the staff and the shining hand were shown, the tyrant desperately cried out: "These two men want to seize power and deprive the ruling class of their sovereign rights!" His apprehension that Moses would do so by force of his magic again reflected a confused state of mind, for nowhere in the world has a political revolution been ever brought about, nor a country taken, nor a war won merely by force of magic. There were many magicians in Egypt, who could perform masterly tricks of magic, but Pharaoh knew it well that they were nonentities because they performed magic only for the sake of rewards.

30. This sentence further shows Pharaoh's perplexed state of mind. A moment before he was the deity of his courtiers and, now, struck by awe, the deity is asking his servants as to what he should do to meet the dangerous situation.

31. As already mentioned in *Sūrah Ṭā Hā* (v. 59), the day fixed for the purpose was the day of the national festivities of the Egyptians so that large crowds of people coming to the festivals from every part of the country should also witness, the grand "contest" which was to be held in the broad daylight so that the spectators could see the per-

performances clearly.

32. That is, besides proclamation heralds were sent to urge the people to come and see the contest. It appears that the news of the miracle shown by Prophet Moses before the packed court had reached the common people also, and Pharaoh fearing that the people at large might be influenced, wanted that they should come together in large numbers so that they could see for themselves that turning a staff into a snake had nothing extraordinary in it because such a trick could be performed by every common magician of their own country as well.

33. This sentence confirms the idea that those who had witnessed the miracle of Moses in the royal court and those who had heard of it reliably outside were losing faith in their ancestral religion, and now the strength of their faith depended on this that their own magicians also should give a performance similar to that of Moses. That is why Pharaoh and his chiefs themselves regarded this contest as a decisive one, and their heralds were busy moving about in the land, impressing on the people that if the magicians won the day, they would yet be secured against the risk of being won over to Moses' religion, otherwise there was every possibility of their creed's being exposed and abandoned for ever.

34. Such was the mentality of the supporters of the polytheistic creed of the land, whose only ambition was to win rewards from the king if they won the day.

35. This was then the highest honour that the king could confer on those who served the creed best. Thus, at the very outset, Pharaoh and his magicians manifested by their conduct the great moral distinction that exists between a Prophet and a magician. On the one side, there stood that embodiment of courage and confidence, who in spite of belonging to the suppressed community of the Israelites and having remained in hiding for ten long years on account of a charge of murder, had suddenly appeared in Pharaoh's court to proclaim fearlessly that he had been sent by the Lord of all Creation and demanded release of the Israelites. He did not even feel the least hesitation in starting a discussion face to face with Pharaoh not caring in the least for his threats. On the other side, there were the wretched magicians wholly lacking in moral fibre, who had been summoned by Pharaoh himself to help secure the ancestral religion, and yet they were begging for rewards in return for the services. And when they are told that they will not only be given rewards but will also be included among the royal courtiers, they feel greatly overjoyed. These two types of characters clearly bring out the difference between the grand personality of a Prophet and that of a mere magician. Unless a man loses all sense of modesty

and decency, he cannot have the audacity to call a Prophet a magician.

36. As soon as they cast down their cords and staffs, these started moving like so many snakes towards Moses. This has been described in greater detail at other places in the Qur'ān. According to Al-A'rāf : 116 : "When they threw down their devices, they bewitched the eyes of the people and terrified their hearts: for they had indeed produced a great magic." And according to Ṭā Hā : 66, 67 : "Suddenly it so appeared to Moses that their cords and staffs were running about by the power of their magic, and Moses' heart was filled with fear."

37. This was not merely an acknowledgment of their defeat at the hands of Moses as though he was a greater magician, but their falling prostrate in submission to Allah, Lord of the universe, was an open declaration before thousands of Egyptians that what Moses had brought about was no magic at all, but a manifestation of the powers of Allah, Almighty.

38. This only shows the extreme obstinacy and obduracy of Pharaoh, who even after witnessing a clear miracle and the testimony of the magicians on it, was still insisting that it was magic. But according to Al-A'rāf : 123, Pharaoh said, "Indeed it was a plot you conspired in the capital to deprive the rightful owners of their power." Thus he tried to make the people believe that the magicians had yielded to Moses not because of the miracle but due to a conspiracy with Moses before they entered the contest, so that they might seize political power and enjoy its fruits together.

39. This horrible threat was held out by Pharaoh to justify his thinking that the magicians had entered a conspiracy with Moses. He thought that the magicians, in order to save their lives, would confess the plot and thus the effect produced by their falling prostrate and believing in Moses in front of thousands of spectators would be gone.

40. That is, "We have to return to our Lord in any case. If you kill us now, we shall present ourselves before Him just today, and we have nothing to worry in this. We rather expect that we shall be forgiven our sins and errors because out of this entire gathering we were the first to believe as soon as reality became known to us."

This reply of the magicians made two things absolutely clear to the people who had been gathered together by Pharaoh heralds:

First, that Pharaoh was a dishonest obdurate and deceitful person. When he saw that Moses had come out successful in the contest which he himself had arranged to be decisive, he concocted a plot and forced the magicians to confess it by coercion and threats. Had there been any truth in it, the magicians would not have readily offered to have their

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رَبَّنَا خَطِينَا أَنْ كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي
 إِنَّكَ مُتَّبَعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِرْعَوْنَ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشُرُومَةٌ
 قَلِيلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَائِظُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَادِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِنْ
 جَدَّتِ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٥٩﴾
 فَاتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَ الْجَمْعُ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾
 قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ
 الْبَحْرَ ۖ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَأَزَلْفْنَا لَهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾
 وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
 لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦٨﴾
 وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوا
 نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَنْظُرُ لَهَا غَافِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ أَوْ
 يَنْفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يُضُرُّونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ
 أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَامُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِي
 إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي
 وَيَسْقِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَالَّذِي يُبَيِّتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ ﴿٨١﴾ وَالَّذِي
 أَظْمَأَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿٨٢﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَ
 الْحَقِّقْنِي بِالصِّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَاجْعَلْنِي
 مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاعْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا تُخْزِنِي
 يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ

We inspired Moses with this:⁴¹ "Set off with My servants by night, for you will be pursued."⁴² At this, Pharaoh sent out heralds to the cities (for mobilization, saying): "These are but a handful of people, who have provoked us much; and we are a host who are always on our guard."⁴³ Thus did We draw them out from their gardens and their water-springs and their treasure-houses and fine dwellings.⁴⁴ This is how they were dealt with, while (on the other hand) We made the Children of Israel inherit all these things.⁴⁵

52-59

In the morning these people set out in pursuit of them. When the two hosts came face to face with each other, the companions of Moses cried out: "We are overtaken!" Moses said, "No, never! With me indeed is my Lord: He will surely guide me."⁴⁶ We inspired Moses with the Command: "Smite the sea with your staff." The sea parted forthwith and its each part stood like a mighty mountain.⁴⁷ And We led to the same place the other host, too. We saved Moses and all his companions, and drowned the others.

60-66

There is indeed a Sign in this,⁴⁹ but most of these people would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful.

67-68

And tell them the story of Abraham⁵⁰ when he asked his father and his people: "What are these things that you worship?"⁵¹ They answered, "These are idols which we worship and we serve them devotedly."⁵² Abraham asked, "Do they hear you when you call on them? Or do they bring any good or harm to you?" They replied, "No, but we have found our elders doing the same."⁵³ At this, Abraham said, "Have you ever seen (with open eyes) the things which you and your elders have been worshipping?⁵⁴ They are all enemies to me,⁵⁵ except One Lord of the worlds,⁵⁶ Who created me,⁵⁷ then He it is Who guides me, Who gives me food and drink, and Who gives me health when I am ill,⁵⁸ Who will cause me to die and then will

69-89

give me life again, and of Whom I expect that He will forgive me my errors on the Day of Judgment.”⁵⁹ (After this Abraham prayed:) “My Lord, bestow upon me knowledge and wisdom⁶⁰ and join me with the righteous,⁶¹ and grant me true renown among posterity,⁶² and include me among the inheritors of the blissful Garden, and forgive my father, for indeed he is from among those who have strayed,⁶³ and do not disgrace me on the Day when everybody will be raised back to life,⁶⁴ when neither wealth will avail anybody, nor children, except that one should appear before Allah with a sound heart.”⁶⁵

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hands and feet cut off on opposite sides and get crucified. The fact that the magicians remained steadfast and firm in their belief even in the face of such a horrible threat, proves that the accusation of plotting a conspiracy against Pharaoh was baseless. The fact was that the magicians being experts in their art had realized that what Moses had displayed was no magic, but surely a manifestation of the powers of Allah, Lord of the universe.

Secondly, thousands of the people who had gathered together from all corners of the land had themselves witnessed the great moral change that had occurred in the magicians as soon as they professed belief in the Lord of the universe. The same magicians who had been summoned to strengthen and secure the ancestral creed by means of their magic, and who, a minute before, were humbly begging Pharaoh for rewards had now become so bold and ennobled spiritually that they would not take any notice of Pharaoh's powers and his threats and were even prepared to face death and extreme physical torture for the sake of their Faith. Thus psychologically there could not be a better occasion to expose the polytheistic creed of the Egyptians in their own eyes and help impress the truth of Moses' religion in the minds of the people.

41. The mention of migration here does not mean that Prophet Moses and the Israelites were immediately ordered to leave Egypt. The history of the intervening period has been related in Al-A'rāf : 127-135 and Yūnus : 83-89, and a part of it has been mentioned in Al-Mu'min : 23-46 and Az-Zukhruf : 46-56. Here the story is being cut short and only the final phase of the conflict between Pharaoh and Prophet Moses is given to show the tragic end of Pharaoh who had remained obdurate even after witnessing clear Signs and the ultimate success of Moses who had Divine support behind his message.

42. The warning that "you will be pursued" shows the wisdom of the instruction to set off during the night. The idea was that before Pharaoh came out with his hosts to pursue them, they should have gone far enough so as to be out of reach of him. It should be borne in mind that the Israelites were not settled in one place in Egypt but were scattered in cities and habitations all over the country and lived in large numbers especially in the land between Memphis and Rameses called Goshen. (See map in Vol. III, p. 31, on the Exodus of the Israelites). It appears that when Prophet Moses was commanded to leave Egypt, he must have sent instructions to the Israelite habitations telling the people to make necessary preparations for migration and he must have also fixed a night for them to leave their homes for the exodus.

43. All this shows that Pharaoh in fact was terror-stricken, but was trying to hide his fear under cover of fearlessness. On the one hand, he was mobilizing forces to face the situation; on the other, he wanted to show that he was undaunted and undeterred, for a despotic ruler like Pharaoh could have no danger from a suppressed and slave community which had been living in disgrace for centuries. That is why his heralds made the people believe that the Israelites were just a handful of people, who could do them no harm, but had to be punished for the provocation they had caused. As for mobilization, it was only a precautionary measure which had been taken to meet any eventuality in time.

44. The general mobilization ordered by Pharaoh was aimed to crush the Israelites completely, but God's device turned the tables on him and drew out all his chiefs and courtiers from their dwelling places and drove them to the place where they and their hosts were to be drowned all together. Had they not pursued the Israelites, nothing would have happened than this that a community would have left the country quietly and they would have continued to enjoy life in their fine dwellings as before. But they in fact had cleverly planned not to allow the Israelites go away peacefully, but to attack the migrating caravans suddenly to finish them completely. For this very purpose the princes and the high chiefs and the nobles came out of their palaces and joined Pharaoh in the campaign, but their cleverness did not avail them anything. Not only did the Israelites succeed in escaping from Egypt, but also at the same time the elite of Pharaoh's tyrannical kingdom perished in the sea.

45. Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that Allah made the Children of Israel to inherit the gardens, water-springs, treasure-houses and fine dwellings vacated and left behind by Pharaoh and his people. This would inevitably mean that after the drowning of Pharaoh, the Israelites returned to Egypt and took possession of the wealth

and properties of Pharaoh's people. This interpretation, however, is neither supported by history nor by other verses of the Qur'ān. The relevant verses of Sūrahs Al-Baqarah, Al-Mā'idah, Al-A'rāf and Ṭā Hā confirm that after the destruction of Pharaoh in the sea, the Israelites did not return to Egypt but proceeded towards their destination (Palestine) and then, till the time of Prophet David (973-1013 B.C.) all the major events of their history took place in the lands which are now known as the Sinai Peninsula, northern Arabia, Transjordan and Palestine. As such, in our opinion the verses mean this: On the one hand, Allah deprived the people of Pharaoh of their wealth, possessions and grandeur, and on the other, He bestowed the same on the Children of Israel in Palestine, and not in Egypt. This same meaning is borne out by vv. 136-137 of Al-A'rāf : "Then We took Our vengeance on them and drowned them in the sea because they had treated Our Signs as false and grown heedless of them. And after them We gave as heritage to those who had been abased and kept low, the eastern and the western parts of that land, which had been blessed bountifully by Us." The epithet of "the blessed land" has generally been used for Palestine in the Qur'ān as in Sūrah Banī Isra'il : 1, Al-Anbiyā' : 71-81, and Sabā' : 18.

46. That is, "He will show me the way out of this calamity."

47. Literally, *tawd* is a high mountain. It appears that as soon as Prophet Moses struck the sea with his staff, it tore the sea asunder and the waters stood like two mighty mountains on the sides and remained in that condition for so long that, on the one hand, the Israelite caravans consisting of hundreds of thousands of the migrants were able to pass through safely, and on the other, Pharaoh and his hosts stepped in and reached the middle of the sea. In the natural course, a phenomenon like this has never occurred that due to a windstorm, however strong, the sea should have parted and stood like mighty mountains on either side for such a long time. According to verse 77 of Ṭā Hā, Prophet Moses was commanded by Allah "to make for them (the Israelites) a dry path across the sea." This shows that the smiting of the sea did not only result in dividing the waters into two parts, which stood like mighty mountains on either side, but it also created a dry path in between without any mud or slush. In this connection, one should also consider verse 24 of Sūrah Dukhān, which says that after Moses had crossed the sea along with his people, he was commanded by Allah "to let the sea remain as it is because Pharaoh is to be drowned in it." This implies that if after crossing the sea, Moses had again struck it with his staff, the two sides would have rejoined, but he was forbidden to do so. Obviously, this was a miracle, and the view of those who try to interpret it as a natural phenomenon, is belied. For explanation, see E.N. 53

of Ṭā Hā.

48. That is, Pharaoh and his army.

49. That is, the Quraish have this lesson to learn from this: "The obdurate people like Pharaoh, his chiefs and followers had not believed even though they had been shown clear miracles for years. They had been so blinded by obduracy that even on the occasion of their drowning in the sea although they had seen the sea parting asunder in front of their very eyes, the waters standing like high mountains on either side, and the dry path in between for the Israelite caravans to pass, yet they failed to understand that Moses had Divine succour and support with him which they had come out to fight. At last when they came to their senses, it was too late, because they had been overtaken by the wrath of Allah and the sea waters had covered them completely. It was on this occasion that Pharaoh had cried out: "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." (Yūnus : 90).

On the other hand, there is a Sign in this for the believers, too. They should understand how Allah by His grace causes the Truth to prevail in the long run and the falsehood to vanish even though the forces of evil may appear to be dominant for the time being.

50. This part of the life-history of Prophet Abraham relates to the time when after his appointment to Prophethood, a conflict had started between him and his people on the questions of *shirk* and *Tauḥīd*. In this connection, the reader should also see Al-Baqarah : 258-260, Al-An'ām : 75-83, Maryam : 41-50, Al-Anbiyā' : 51-70, Aṣ-Ṣāffāt : 83-113, and Al-Mumtaḥanah : 4-5.

The Qur'ān has specially repeated this part of Prophet Abraham's life-story over and over again because the Arabs in general and the Quraish in particular regarded themselves as his followers and professed his way and creed. Besides them, the Christians and the Jews also claimed that Abraham was their religious leader and guide. That is why the Qur'ān admonishes them over and over again that the creed brought by Abraham was Islam itself, which is now being presented by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and which they are opposing tooth and nail. Prophet Abraham was not a *mushrik*, but an antagonist against *shirk*, and for the same reason he had to leave his home and country and live as a migrant in Syria, Palestine and Hejāz. Thus he was neither a Jew nor a Christian, because Judaism and Christianity appeared centuries after him. This historical argument could neither be refuted by the *mushriks*, nor by the Jews or the Christians, because the *mushriks* themselves admitted that idol-worship in Arabia had started several centuries after Prophet Abraham, and the Jews

and the Christians also could not deny that Prophet Abraham had lived long before the beginning of Judaism and Christianity. This obviously meant that the special beliefs and customs which those people thought formed the basis of their religion, were not part of the original religion taught by Prophet Abraham. True religion was the one which had no tinge of those impurities, but was based on those worship and obedience of One Allah alone. That is why the Qur'ān says:

“Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim, sound in the Faith, and he was not of those who set up partners with Allah. Surely only those people who follow Abraham are entitled to claim a relationship with him. Now this Prophet and the believers are better entitled to this relationship.” (Al-An'ām : 67, 68).

51. Obviously the object of this question was to remind the people that the deities which they worshipped were false and absolutely powerless. In Sūrah Al-Anbiyā', the same question has been posed thus: “What are these images to which you are so devoted?” (V. 52).

52. Though everybody knew that they worshipped idols, their answer implied that they were firm in faith and their hearts were satisfied with it, as if to say, “We also know that these are idols of stone and wood, which we worship, but our faith demands that we should serve and worship them devotedly.”

53. That is, “We do not worship and serve them because they hear our prayers and supplications, or that they can harm and benefit us, but because we have seen our elders worshipping and serving them.” Thus, they themselves admitted that the only reason of their worshipping the idols was the blind imitation of their forefathers. In other words, they meant this: “There is nothing new in what you are telling us. We know that these are idols of stone and wood, which do not hear anything, nor can harm or do good; but we cannot believe that our elders who have been worshipping them since centuries, generation after generation, were foolish people. They must have had some good reason for worshipping these lifeless images, so we are doing the same as we have full faith in them.”

54. That is, “Is it enough to say that a religion is true only because it has been held as such by their ancestors? Should people, generation after generation, go on following their ancestors in their footsteps blindly without ever caring to see whether the deities they worship possess any divine attribute or not, and whether they have any power to influence their destinies?”

55. That is, “When I consider them, I see that if I worship them, I shall ruin myself both in this world and in the Hereafter. As their worship is clearly harmful, worshipping them is worshipping one's

enemy." These words of Prophet Abraham bear a close connection with verses 81, 82 of Sūrah Maryam, which say: "These people have set up other gods than Allah so that they may become their supporters. But they will have no supporter; all of them will not only disown their worship but also become their opponents (on the Day of Judgment)."

It should be noted that Prophet Abraham did not say, "They are enemies to you", but said, "They are enemies to me." In the first case, there was every chance that the people would have felt offended and provoked, because it would have been difficult for them to understand how their own gods could be their enemies. As a matter of fact, Prophet Abraham appealed to the natural feeling of man that he is his own well-wisher and cannot wish ill of himself deliberately. This would inevitably have led the addressees to think whether what they were doing was really for their good and was in no way harmful.

56. That is, "Of all the deities who are being worshipped in the world, there is only One Allah alone, Lord of the universe, in whose worship I find any good for myself, and Whose worship is the worship of one's own Cherisher and Supporter, and not of one's enemy." Then Prophet Abraham briefly gives the arguments, which nobody could refute, as to why Allah alone is worthy of man's worship and indirectly suggests that his addressees (the idol-worshippers) had no rational basis for worshipping deities other than Allah except in blind imitation of their forefathers.

57. This is the first reason for which Allah, and One Allah alone, is worthy of man's worship. The people also knew and believed that Allah alone was their Creator without any partner. Not only they but all the polytheists of the world also have always held the belief that even the deities they worshipped were the creation of Allah, and except for the atheists none have ever denied that Allah is the Creator of the whole universe. This argument of Prophet Abraham implied that being a creature, he could only worship his Creator, Who was alone worthy of his worship, and none else, because none besides Allah had any share in His creation.

58. The second reason for worshipping Allah and Allah alone is that Allah had not become unconcerned with man after creating him and let him alone to seek other supporters for help, but had also taken the responsibility of making arrangements for his guidance, protection and fulfilment of his needs. The moment a human child is born, milk is produced for it in the breasts of its mother, and some unseen power teaches it the way to suck it and take it down the throat. From the first day of his life till his death, the Creator has provided in the world around him all necessary means required for

every stage of his life for his development and guidance, sustenance and survival. He has also endowed him with all those powers and abilities which are needed to use the means with advantage and given him all necessary guidance for every sphere of life. Then for the protection of human life against all sorts of disease, germs and poisons, He has created such effective antidotes that they have not yet been fully encompassed by human knowledge. If these natural arrangements had not been made, even a thorn-prick would have proved fatal. When this all-pervading mercy and providence of the Creator is supporting and sustaining man at all times in every way, there could be no greater folly and ingratitude on the part of man than this that he should bow down before others than Allah and seek their help in need and trouble.

59. The third reason for worshipping none but Allah is that man's relation with his God is not merely confined to this worldly life, which will end at death, but extends to life-after-death also. The same God Who brought him into existence, recalls him and there is no power which can stop his return from the world. No remedy, no physician no god or goddess has ever been able to catch the hand which takes man out of this world. Even all those men who were made deities and worshipped, could not ward off their own deaths. Only Allah judges and decides when a particular person is to be recalled from the world, and whenever somebody is recalled by Him, he has to leave this world in any case. Then it is Allah alone Who will decide as to when He should raise back to life all those people who were born in this world and died and buried here, and ask them to account for their worldly lives. Then also nobody will have the power to stop resurrection of himself or others. Every human being will have to rise on the Command of Allah and appear in His Court. Then Allah alone will be the Judge on that Day, and nobody else will be a partner in his judgment in any degree. To punish or to forgive will be entirely in Allah's hand. Nobody will have the power to get somebody forgiven if Allah would want to punish him, and punished if Allah would want to forgive him. All those who are regarded as intercessors in the world, will themselves be hoping for Allah's mercy and grace for their forgiveness. In view of these facts anybody who worships others than Allah, is in fact preparing for his own doom. There can be no greater misfortune than this that man should turn away from Allah Who controls his life here as well as in the Hereafter, and should turn for help and support to those who are utterly powerless in this regard.

60. *Hukm* here does not mean "Prophethood", because at the

time this prayer was made, Prophet Abraham had already been appointed a Prophet. Even if this prayer was made before that, Prophethood is not bestowed on request, but it is something which Allah Himself bestows on those He wills. That is why, *ḥukm* has been translated wisdom, knowledge, right understanding and power of judgment. The Holy Prophet is also reported to have made a similar prayer:

ارنا الاشياء كما هي — *Arinal-ashyāa' kamā hiya* : "O Allah, give us the power to see and understand a thing as it really is and to form an opinion about it according to its reality."

61. "Join me with the righteous:" Give me a righteous society to live in in this world and raise me along with the righteous in the Hereafter." To be raised back to life with the righteous and to attain one's salvation have one and the same meaning. Therefore, this should be the prayer of every person who believes in the life-after-death and in reward and punishment. Even in this world a pious man cherishes the desire that God should save him from living a life in an immoral and wicked society and should join him with the righteous people. A pious and righteous person will remain ill at ease and restless until either his own society should become clean and pure morally, or he leaves it to join another society which is practising and following the principles of truth and honesty.

62. "Grant me true renown among posterity": "Grant me the grace that posterity should remember me as a good and pious man after my death and not as one of the unjust people, who were not only wicked themselves, but who left nothing but wickedness behind them in the world. Enable me to perform such high deeds that my life should become a source of light for others for all times to come, and I should be counted among the benefactors of humanity."

This is not a prayer for worldly greatness and renown, but for true greatness and renown, which can be achieved only as a result of solid and valuable services. A person's achieving such true renown and glory has two good aspects :

(1) The people of the world get a good example to follow, as against bad examples, which inspires them with piety and encourages them to follow the right way ; and (2) the righteous person will not only get the rewards of works done by posterity who were guided aright by the good example left and set by him, but in addition to his own good works, he will have the evidence of the millions of people in his favour that he had left behind him in the world fountains of guidance, which went on benefiting people, generation after generation, till the Day of Resurrection.

63. Some commentators have interpreted this prayer of Prophet

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سَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَ أَزَلَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَ بُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغُوفِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقِيلَ
 لَهُمْ أَيُّمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾
 فَكُتِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَ جُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ قَالُوا وَ هُمْ فِيهَا
 يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِذْ نُسَوِّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾
 وَ مَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ لَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٥٧﴾
 فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةٌ فَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ط وَ مَا كَانَ
 أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ
 الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ
 أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ
 إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ لَكُمْ وَ
 اتَّبِعْكَ الْأَرْدَلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ وَ مَا عَلِمِي بِهَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ
 إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَ مَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ
 مُبِينٌ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا لَنْ لَوْ تَنْتَهَ يَنْوَحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنْ
 قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٧١﴾ فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَ نَجِّنِي وَ مَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَانجَيْنَاهُ وَ مَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفَلَكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿٧٣﴾ ثُمَّ اغْرَمْنَا بَعْدُ
 الْبَقِيَّةَ ﴿٧٤﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ط وَ مَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
 لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٧٦﴾ كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ
 هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ
 مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اتَّبَعُوا

—(On that Day)⁶⁶ Paradise will be brought close to the righteous, and Hell will be set open before the straying ones,⁶⁷ and they will be asked: "Where are those whom you worshipped instead of Allah? Are they of any help to you, or even to themselves?" Then these deities and those erring people, and the hosts of Satan, all will be hurled into it, one upon the other.⁶⁸ Therein they will dispute with one another, and these erring people will say (to their deities): "By God! We had certainly strayed when we held you equal in rank with the Lord of the worlds, and they were criminals indeed who led us astray.⁶⁹ Now we have neither any intercessor⁷⁰ nor any true friend.⁷¹ Would that we were given a chance to return (to the world) so that we became believers."⁷²—

90-102

Indeed there is a great Sign in this,⁷³ but most of these people would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful.

103-104

Noah's people⁷⁴ rejected the Messengers.⁷⁵ Remember the time when their brother Noah said to them: "Do you not fear?⁷⁶ I am a Messenger to you worthy of full trust:⁷⁷ so fear Allah and obey me:⁷⁸ I do not ask of you any reward for this duty, for my reward is with the Lord of the worlds;⁷⁹ therefore, you should fear Allah and obey me (without hesitation)."⁸⁰ They replied, "Should we believe in you, whereas the meanest of the people have become your followers?"⁸¹ Noah said, "I have no knowledge of what they do: their account is the concern of my Lord: would that you had used some common-sense!⁸² I am not here to drive away those who believe; I am only a plain warner."⁸³ They said, "O Noah, if you do not desist from this, you will surely become one of the accursed."⁸⁴ Noah prayed: "My Lord, my people have treated me as a liar:⁸⁵ now settle the accounts between us, and deliver me and the believers with me to safety."⁸⁶ At last, We rescued him and his companions in a laden Ark,⁸⁷ and then drowned all the others.

105-120

Indeed there is a Sign in this, but most of these people

121-122

would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful.

123-127

'Ād rejected the Messengers.⁸⁸ Remember the time when their brother Hūd said to them,⁸⁹ "Do you not fear? I am a Messenger to you worthy of full trust: so fear Allah and obey me. I do not ask of you any reward for this duty, for my reward is with the Lord of the worlds.

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Abraham for his father's forgiveness to imply that he had prayed to God to grant his father the favour to accept Islam because forgiveness in any case is inter-linked with and dependent upon Faith. But this interpretation is not borne out by the other verses of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān says that when Prophet Abraham left his home at the tyrannical treatment of his father, he said, "I bid farewell to you ; I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you for He is very kind to me." (Maryam : 47) To fulfil this promise, he not only prayed for the forgiveness of his father, but for both his parents: "Lord, forgive me and my parents..." (Ibrāhīm : 41). But afterwards he himself realized that an enemy of the Truth, even if he be the father of a believer, does not deserve a prayer of forgiveness. Thus according to verse 114 of At-Taubah: "The prayer of Abraham for his father was only to fulfil a promise he had made to him, but when he realized that he was an enemy of Allah, he disowned him."

64. That is, "Do not put me to disgrace on the Day of Judgement by inflicting punishment on my father in front of all mankind, when I myself shall be witnessing his punishment helplessly."

65. It cannot be said with certainty whether vv. 88, 89 are a part of Prophet Abraham's prayer, or they are an addition by Allah. In the first case, they will mean that Prophet Abraham while praying for his father had a full realization of these facts. In the second case, they will be a comment by Allah on Abraham's prayer, as if to say, "On the Day of Judgement, only a sound heart, sound in faith and free from disobedience and sin, will be of any avail to man and not wealth and children, for wealth and children can be useful only if one possesses a sound heart. Wealth will be useful if one would have spent it sincerely and faithfully for the sake of Allah, otherwise even a millionaire will be a poor man there. Children also will be of help only to the extent that a person might have educated them in Faith and good conduct to the best of his ability ; otherwise even if the son is a Prophet, his father will not escape punishment, if he died in the state of unbelief, because such a father will have no share in the goodness of his children."

66. Verses 90-102 do not seem to be a part of Prophet Abraham's

speech, but they are Allah's words.

67. That is, on the one hand, the righteous people will be shown the countless blessings which they will enjoy in Paradise by Allah's grace, and on the other, Hell will be set open with all its dreads and horrors before the straying people, when they will still be in the Plain of Resurrection.

68. *Kubkibū* in the Text has two meanings: (1) They will be hurled into Hell one upon the other ; and (2) they will go on rolling down into the depths of Hell.

69. This is how the followers will treat their religious leaders and guides, whom they served and revered like deities in the world, whose words and patterns of behaviour they took as authoritative and before whom they presented all sorts of offerings in the world. In the Hereafter when the people will find that their guides had misled them and caused their ruin as well as their own, they will hold them responsible for it and will curse them. The Qur'an has presented this horrible scene of the Hereafter at several places so as to admonish the blind followers to see and judge carefully whether their guides in this world were leading them on the right path or not. For instance: "As each generation will be entering Hell, it will curse its preceding generation till all generations shall be gathered together there ; then each succeeding generation will say regarding the preceding one, 'O Lord, these were the people who led us astray; therefore give them a double chastisement of the Fire.' Allah will reply, 'There is a double chastisement for every one but you know it not.'" (Al-A'rāf : 38). "And the disbelievers will say, 'Our Lord, bring those jinns and men before us, who led us astray so that we may trample them under our feet and put them to extreme disgrace.'" (Hā Mīm Sajdah: 29). "And they will say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great men and they misled us from the right path; our Lord, give them a double chastisement and curse them with a severe curse.'" (Al-Aḥzāb : 67-68).

70. That is, "Those whom we regarded as our intercessors in the world and who, we believed, would take us safely into Paradise, are utterly helpless today and of no avail to us."

71. That is, "We have no sympathizer either who could feel for us and console us." The Qur'an says that in the Hereafter only the believers will continue to be friends ; as for the disbelievers, they will turn enemies of one another even though they had been sworn friends in the world. Each will hold the other as responsible for the doom and try to get him maximum punishment. "Friends on that Day will become enemies of one another except the righteous (who will continue to be friends)." (Az-Zukhruf : 67).

72. That Qur'ān has given an answer to this kind of longing and desire as well : "... even if they be sent back to the earthly life, they would do all that they had been forbidden to do." (Al-An'ām : 28). As for the reasons why they will not be allowed to return to the world, please see E.N.'s 90-92 of Al-Mu'minūn above.

73. There are two aspects of the Sign in the story of Prophet Abraham: (1) On the one hand, the *mushriks* of Arabia, especially the Quraish, claimed that they were the followers of Prophet Abraham and were proud of being his descendents, but on the other, they were involved in *shirk* against which Prophet Abraham had been engaged in a relentless struggle throughout his life. Then these people were opposing and treating the Prophet who was inviting them towards the religion brought by Prophet Abraham in the like manner as Prophet Abraham himself had been opposed and treated by his people. They have been reminded that Abraham was an enemy of *shirk* and an upholder of *Tauḥīd*, which they themselves admitted, and yet they persisted in their obduracy to follow the creed of *shirk*. (2) The people of Abraham were eliminated from the world: if any of them survived, it was the children of Prophet Abraham and his sons, Ishmael and Isaac (may Allah's peace be upon them). Though the Qur'an does not mention the torment that descended on Abraham's people after he had left them, it has included them among the tormented tribes: "Has not the story reached them of those who had gone before them: the people of Noah, the tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd, the people of Abraham, and the inhabitants of Midian and of the overturned cities?" (At-Taubah : 70).

74. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf: 59-64, Yūnus: 71-73, Hūd: 25-48, Banī Isra'il: 3, Al-Anbiyāa' 76-77, Al-Mu'minūn: 23-30, and Al-Furqān: 37. For the details of the story of Prophet Noah, see Al-'Ankabūt: 14-15, Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 75-82, Al-Qamar: 9-15 and Sūrah Nūḥ itself.

75. Though they had rejected only one Messenger, it 'amounted to rejecting all the messengers because all of them had brought one and the same message from Allah. This is an important fact which the Qur'ān has mentioned over and over again in different ways. Thus, even those people who rejected just one Prophet have been regarded as unbelievers though they believed in all other Prophets, for the simple reason that the believer in the truth of one Messenger cannot deny the same truth in other cases unless he does so on account of racial prejudice, imitation of elders, etc.

76. The initial address of Prophet Noah to his people, as mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān, was as follows: "O my people,

worship Allah alone: you have no other deity than Him. Are you not afraid (of Him)?" (Al-Mu'minūn: 23); and "Worship Allah and fear Him and obey me." (Nūḥ: 3). That is, "Are you not afraid of the consequences of adopting an attitude of rebellion against Allah and worshipping others than Him?"

77. It has two meanings: (1) "I present before you nothing but what Allah reveals to me;" and (2) "I am a Messenger whom you have already known to be a trustworthy and honest and righteous man. When I have been honest and true in my dealings with you, how can I be dishonest and untrustworthy in conveying the Message of God? Therefore, you should rest assured that whatever I am presenting is the "Truth."

78. That is, "When I am a truthful and trustworthy Messenger, you are duty bound to obey me alone as against all other patrons, and carry out my commands and instructions, because I represent the will of God: obedience to me is in fact obedience to God and disobedience to me is disobedience to Him." In other words, the people are not only required to accept a Messenger as a true Messenger sent by Allah, but it inevitably implies that they have to obey him and follow his Law against all other laws. To reject a Prophet, or to disobey him after accepting him as a Prophet, is tantamount to rebellion against God, which inevitably leads to His wrath. The words "fear Allah" are, therefore, a warning that every hearer should clearly understand the consequences of rejecting the message of a Messenger or of disobeying his commands.

79. This is the second of the two arguments of Prophet Noah about the truth of his message, the first being that they had known him as a trustworthy man during his earlier life, which he had lived among them. This second argument implies this: "I do not have any selfish motive or personal interest in conveying the message which I am propagating day and night in spite of all sorts of opposition and antagonism from you. At least you should understand this that I am sincere in my invitation, and am presenting honestly only that which I believe to be the truth and in following which I see the true success and well-being of humanity at large. I have no personal motive in this that I should fabricate falsehood to fool the people."

These two arguments are among the most important arguments which the Qur'ān has advanced repeatedly as proofs of the truthfulness of the Prophets, and which it presents as criterion for judging Prophethood. A man who before Prophethood has lived a life in a society and has always been found to be honest, truthful and righteous, cannot be doubted even by a prejudiced person that he would

suddenly start fabricating falsehood in the name of Allah and making people believe that he has been appointed a Prophet by Him, whereas he has been not. More important than that: such a lie cannot be fabricated with a good intention unless somebody has a 'selfish motive attached to this kind of fraud. And even when a person indulges in this sort of fraud, he cannot hide it completely from the people. The foul means and devices adopted by him to promote his "business" become known and all the various selfish interests and gains become all too apparent. Contrary to this, the personal life of a Prophet is full of moral excellences: it has no trace of the employment of foul means and devices. Not to speak of any personal interest, he expends whatever he has for the cause of a mission which to all appearances is fruitless. No person who possesses any common sense and also has a sense of justice, can ever imagine that a sensible man who was leading a perfectly peaceful life, would come out all of a sudden with a false claim, when such a false claim does not do him any good, but on the contrary, demands all his money, time and energy and earns him nothing in return but the antagonism and hostility of the whole world. Sacrifice of personal interests is the foremost proof of a man's sincerity; therefore, doubting the intentions and sincerity of a person who has been sacrificing his personal interests for years and years can only be the pastime of the one who himself is selfish and insincere. Please also see E.N. 70 of Al-Mu'minūn above.

80. Repetition of this sentence is not without reason. In the first case (v. 108), it implied this: "You should fear Allah if you treat as false a true and trustworthy Messenger from Him, whom you yourselves have been regarding as a true and trustworthy man in the past." Here it means this: "You should fear Allah if you doubt the intention of a person who is working sincerely only for the reformation of the people without any personal interest." This thing has been stressed because the chiefs of Prophet Noah's people, in order to find fault with his message of Truth, accused him of struggling merely for his personal superiority: "He merely intends to obtain superiority over you." (Al-Mu'minūn: 24).

81. This answer to Prophet Noah's message of Truth was given by the chiefs, elders and nobles of his people as mentioned in Hūd: 27: "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, and we also see that only the meanest from among us have become your followers without due consideration, and we find nothing in you that might give you superiority over us.'" This shows that those who believed in Prophet Noah were mostly the poor people, and

ordinary workmen, or some youth who enjoyed no position in society. As for the influential and rich people, they had become his bitter opponents, and were trying by every trick and allurements to keep the common man behind them. One of the arguments they advanced against Prophet Noah was this: "Had there been some weight and substance in Noah's message, the rich people, scholars, religious divines, nobles and wise people of the community should have accepted it, but none of them has believed in him; the only people to follow him are the foolish people belonging to the lowest stratum of society, who have no common-sense. Now how can the noble and high ranking people like us join the company of the common people?"

Precisely the same thing was being said by the unbelieving Quraish about the Holy Prophet and his followers. Abū Sufyān in reply to the questions asked by Heraclius had said: "Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) has been followed by the poor and weak of our people." What they seemed to be thinking was that Truth was that which was considered as Truth by the chiefs and elders of the community, for only they had the necessary common-sense and power of judgment. As for the common people, their being common was a proof that they lacked sense and judgment. As such, if a thing was accepted by them but rejected by the chiefs, it meant that the thing itself was without worth and value. The disbelievers of Makkah even went further. They argued that a Prophet could not be a common man: if God had to appoint a Prophet, He would have appointed a great chief to be a Prophet: "They say: why has not the Qur'ān been sent down to a prominent man of our two cities (Makkah and Ṭā'if)?" (Az-Zukhruf: 31).

82. This is the first answer to their objection, which was based on the assumption that the poor people belonging to the working classes and lower social strata who performed humble duties, did not possess any mental maturity and were without intelligence and common-sense. Therefore, their belief was without any rational basis, and so unreliable, and their deeds were of no value at all. To this Prophet Noah replies, "I have no means of judging the motives and assessing the worth of the deeds of the people who accept my message and act accordingly. This is not my concern but the responsibility of God".

83. This is the second answer to their objection, which implied that since those who were gathering around Noah as believers, belonged to the lowest social strata, none of the nobles would like to join them, as if to say, "O Noah, should we believe in you in order to be counted among the low-ranking people like the slaves and servants and workmen?" To this Prophet Noah answers, "How can I adopt this irrational attitude that I should attend earnestly to those who do not like to

listen to me, but drive away those who have believed and followed me? I am simply a warner, who has declared openly that the way you are following is wrong and will lead you to ruin, and the way that I am inviting to is the way of salvation for all. Now it is up to you whether you heed my warning and adopt the right path, or go on following blindly the way to your ruin. It does not behove me that I should start inquiring into the castes and ancestry and trades of the people who have heeded my warning and adopted the right path. They might be "mean" in your sight, but I cannot drive them away and wait to see when the "nobles" will give up the path of destruction and adopt the way of salvation and success instead."

Precisely the same thing was going on between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers of Makkah when these verses were revealed, and one can fully understand why the dialogue between Prophet Noah and the chiefs of his people, has been related here. The chiefs of the disbelievers of Makkah thought exactly the same way. They said how they could sit side by side with the slaves like Bilāl, 'Ammār and Şuhaib and other men of the working class, as if to say, "Unless these poor people are turned out, there can be no possibility that the nobles may consider to become believers; it is impossible that the master and the slave should stand shoulder to shoulder with each other." In answer to this the Holy Prophet was commanded by Allah to tell the vain and arrogant disbelievers plainly that the poor believers could not be driven out of Islam just for their sake: "O Muḥammad, you attend earnestly to him who has shown indifference (to your message), whereas you have no responsibility if he does not reform himself; and the one who comes to you earnestly, fearing Allah, to him you pay no attention. Nay! this indeed is an Admonition, so let him who wills, accept it."

(Abasa : 5-12).

"And do not drive away those who invoke their Lord morning and evening and are engaged in seeking His favour. You are not in any way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you: so, if you should drive them away, you shall be counted among the unjust. As a matter of fact, in this way We have made some of them a means of test for others, so that, seeing them, they should say, 'Are these the people from among us upon whom Allah has showered His blessings?'—Yes: does not Allah know His grateful servants better than they?" (Al-An'ām : 52-53).

84. The words in the Text may have two meanings: (1) "You will be stoned to death"; and (2) "You will be showered with abuses from all sides, and cursed and reviled wherever you go."

85. That is, "They have rejected me completely and absolutely

and now there is no hope of their becoming believers." Here nobody should have the misunderstanding that just after this conversation between Prophet Noah and the chiefs of his people, and the rejection of his message by them, the Prophet submitted a report to Allah that his people had rejected him and now He should settle the accounts between them. The Qur'ān has mentioned at different places the details of the long struggle that went on for centuries between Prophet Noah and his people, who persisted in unbelief. According to verse 14 of Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt, the struggle continued for 950 years: "He (Noah) remained among them for a thousand years save fifty years." Prophet Noah during this long period studied their collective behaviour, generation after generation, and came to the conclusion that they had no inclination to accept the Truth, and formed the opinion that in their future generations also there was no hope of anybody's becoming a believer and adopting the righteous attitude: "My Lord, if You should leave them, they will lead Your servants astray, and they will bear as children none but sinners and disbelievers." (Nūḥ : 27). Allah Himself confirmed this opinion of Noah, saying, "No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So do not grieve at their misdeeds." (Hūd : 36).

86. "Deliver me and the believers with me to safety": "You should not only give Your judgment as to who is in the right and who is in the wrong, but deliver Your Judgment in such a manner that the followers of the Truth are saved and the followers of falsehood are completely annihilated from the earth."

87. "Laden Ark", because the Ark became full with the believers and the pairs of animals from every species. For further details, see Hūd : 40.

88. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf: 65-72, Hūd: 50-60; and for further details of this story, see Hā Mīm Sajdah: 13-16, Al-Aḥqāf: 21-26, Az-Zāriyāt : 41-45, Al-Qamar : 18-22, Al-Hāqqah : 4-8, and Al-Fajr : 6-8.

89. In order to understand this discourse of Prophet Hūd fully, we should keep in mind the various details about the people of 'Ād which the Qur'ān has given at different places. For instance, it says :

(1) After the destruction of the people of Noah, the 'Ād were given power and prominence in the world: "Do not forget that after Noah's people your Lord made you the successors." (Al-A'rāf: 69).

(2) Physically they were very robust and powerful people: "...and made you very robust." (Al-A'rāf : 69).

(3) They had no parallel as a nation in the world: "The like of

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بِكُلِّ رِيحٍ آيَةٌ تَعْبَثُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَتَسْخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَإِذَا
 بَطِشْتُمْ بَطِشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاطِيعُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ
 بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَجَنَّتِ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٤٤﴾ إِنِّي أَخَافُ
 عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٤٥﴾ قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَطْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ
 الْوَعِظِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ
 فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ ﴿١٤٩﴾ إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ
 لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥١﴾ كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ
 صَالِحٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاطِيعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَ
 مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي
 مَا هُمْ بِأُمِينِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ فِي جَنَّتِ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٥٩﴾ وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلَعَتْ هَاضِمٌ ﴿١٦٠﴾
 وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَرِهِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاطِيعُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ وَلَا
 تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ السُّرِفِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾
 قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَخَّرِينَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بآيَةٍ إِنْ
 كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿١٦٧﴾
 وَلَا تَسْوَأُوا بِسُوءِ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٦٨﴾ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا
 نِدْمِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾
 وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧١﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ
 أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاطِيعُونَ ﴿١٧٥﴾
 وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ أَتَأْتُونَ

ع ١٨
١١ع ١٩
١٢

What! you erect for mere pleasure, a monument on every high spot,⁹⁰ and build huge castles as if you were immortal;⁹¹ and when you seize somebody, you seize him like a tyrant.⁹² So fear Allah and obey me. Fear Him Who has bestowed on you all that you know: He gave you cattle and children and gardens and water-springs. I fear the torment of a dreadful Day for you." They replied, "Whether you admonish us or not, it is the same for us: such things have been said in the past as well,⁹³ and we are certainly not going to be chastised." At last, they rejected him, and We destroyed them.⁹⁴ 128-139

Indeed there is a Sign in this, but most of these people would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful. 139-140

Thamūd rejected the Messengers.⁹⁵ Remember the time when their brother Ṣāliḥ said to them, "Do you not fear? I am a Messenger to you worthy of full trust:⁹⁶ so fear Allah and obey me. I do not ask of you any reward for this duty, for my reward is with the Lord of the worlds. Will you be left in security amidst all that is around you here?⁹⁷ — in the gardens and the water-springs? — in the corn-fields and the date-groves laden with juicy fruit?⁹⁸ You proudly carve out dwellings in the hills.⁹⁹ Fear Allah and obey me, and do not follow the transgressors who spread mischief in the land and reform nothing."¹⁰⁰ They replied, "You are only an enchanted person:¹⁰¹ you are no more than a man like us: bring forth a sign if you are truthful."¹⁰² Ṣāliḥ said, "Here is a she-camel.¹⁰³ One day will be for her to drink, and one day for you all to take water.¹⁰⁴ Do not at all molest her; otherwise you will be overtaken by the torment of a dreadful day." Yet they hamstrung her,¹⁰⁵ and then became regretful, for the torment overtook them.¹⁰⁶ 141-158

Indeed there is a Sign in this, but most of these people would not believe; and the fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful. 158-159

The people of Lot rejected the Messengers.¹⁰⁷ Remember the time when their brother Lot said to them, "Do you not fear? I am a Messenger to you worthy of full trust: so fear Allah and obey me. I do not ask of you any reward for this duty, for my reward is with the Lord of the worlds."

Contd. from p. 249]

which was not created in the lands." (Al-Fajr : 8).

(4) They were civilized and were well-known in the world for their great skill and art in erecting lofty buildings with tall columns: "Have you not seen what your Lord did with 'Ād Iram, of lofty columns?" (Al-Fajr : 6, 7).

(5) This material progress and physical power had made them arrogant and vain: "As for 'Ād, they deviated from the right part and adopted an arrogant attitude in the land and said, 'who is mightier than we in power?'" (Ḥa Mīm Sajdah : 15).

(6) Their political power was in the hands of a few tyrants before whom none could dare raise his voice: "...and they followed and obeyed every tyrannous enemy of the Truth." (Hūd : 59).

(7) They were not disbelievers in the existence of Allah, but were involved in *shirk*; they only denied that Allah alone should be worshipped and none else: "They said (to Hūd), 'Have you come to us (with the demand) that we should worship Allah alone and discard those whom our elders have been worshipping?'" (Al-A'rāf : 70).

90. That is, "You build grand buildings merely to show off your wealth and power, whereas they have no use and purpose except that they stand as monuments to your grandeur and glory."

91. That is, "Though you have built other buildings also for dwelling purposes, in order to make them grand, beautiful and strong, you expend your wealth and mental and physical abilities in a manner as if you were going to live for ever, and there was no purpose of life except seeking of comfort and pleasure and nothing beyond this worldly life which might deserve your attention."

In this connection, one should bear in mind the fact that extravagance in architecture is not a solitary vice in a people. This happens as a result of a people's becoming affluent and then crazy for selfish gains and materialistic pursuits. When a people reach such a stage, their whole social system becomes corrupted and polluted. Prophet Hūd's criticism of his people's extravagant and luxurious architecture was not simply aimed at the high castles and monuments, but he was actually

criticising their corrupt civilization and social system, whose glaring symptoms could be seen everywhere in the land in the shape of castles and monuments.

92. That is, "In order to meet the demands of your ever rising standards of life, you do not rest content with small living quarters but you build castles and fortresses, and yet being unsatisfied you erect lofty edifices unnecessarily just for ostentation. But as human beings you have become so depraved that there is no mercy in your hearts for the weak, no justice for the poor, and all people of lower social strata, living inside or around your land, are being oppressed tyrannically and none is safe from your barbarities."

93. This can have two meanings: (1) "Whatever we are doing is not new but has been happening from the time of our elders since centuries: they had the same creed, the same way of life, the same morality and the same kind of dealings and yet they remained unharmed and safe from every calamity. If there was any evil in this way of life, we should have met the doom with which you are threatening us." (2) "The things you are preaching have been preached and said before also by religious maniacs and so-called moralists, but they could not change the ways of the world. It has never happened that the world suffered a disaster only because people refused to listen to preachers like you."

94. According to the Qur'ān, the people of 'Ād were destroyed by a violent windstorm. When they saw it advancing towards their valleys, they rejoiced with the hope that those were dense clouds which would bring much rain for them, but in reality it was Allah's scourge. The windstorm continued to rage for eight days and seven nights and destroyed everything. The people were swept away like straw and everything on which the hot, dry wind blew was left rotting. The storm did not abate until the last man of the wicked tribe had met his doom. Only ruins of their habitations remained to tell the tale of their terrible fate, and today even the ruins have become extinct. The whole territory of Aḥqāf has turned into dreadful desert dunes. For details, see E.N. 25 of Al-Aḥqāf.

95. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf : 73-79, Hūd : 61-68, Al-Hijr : 80-84, Banī Isra'il : 59; and for further details, see An-Naml : 45-53, Az-Zāriyāt : 43-45, Al-Qamar : 23-31, Al-Hāqqah : 4-5, Al-Fajr : 9, and Ash-Shams : 11.

Thamūd achieved power and glory after the destruction of 'Ād and as far as progress in civilization is concerned, they followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. In their case, too, the standards of living went on rising higher and higher and the standards of humanity continued to fall lower and lower, suffering one deterioration after the other.

On the one hand, they erected large edifices on the plains and hewed beautiful houses out of the hills like those in the caves of Ellora and Ajanta in India, and on the other, they became addicted to idol-worship and the land was filled with tyranny and oppression. The worst men became leaders and rulers in the land. As such, Prophet Ṣāliḥ's message of Truth only appealed to the weak people belonging to the lower social strata and the people of the upper classes refused to believe in him.

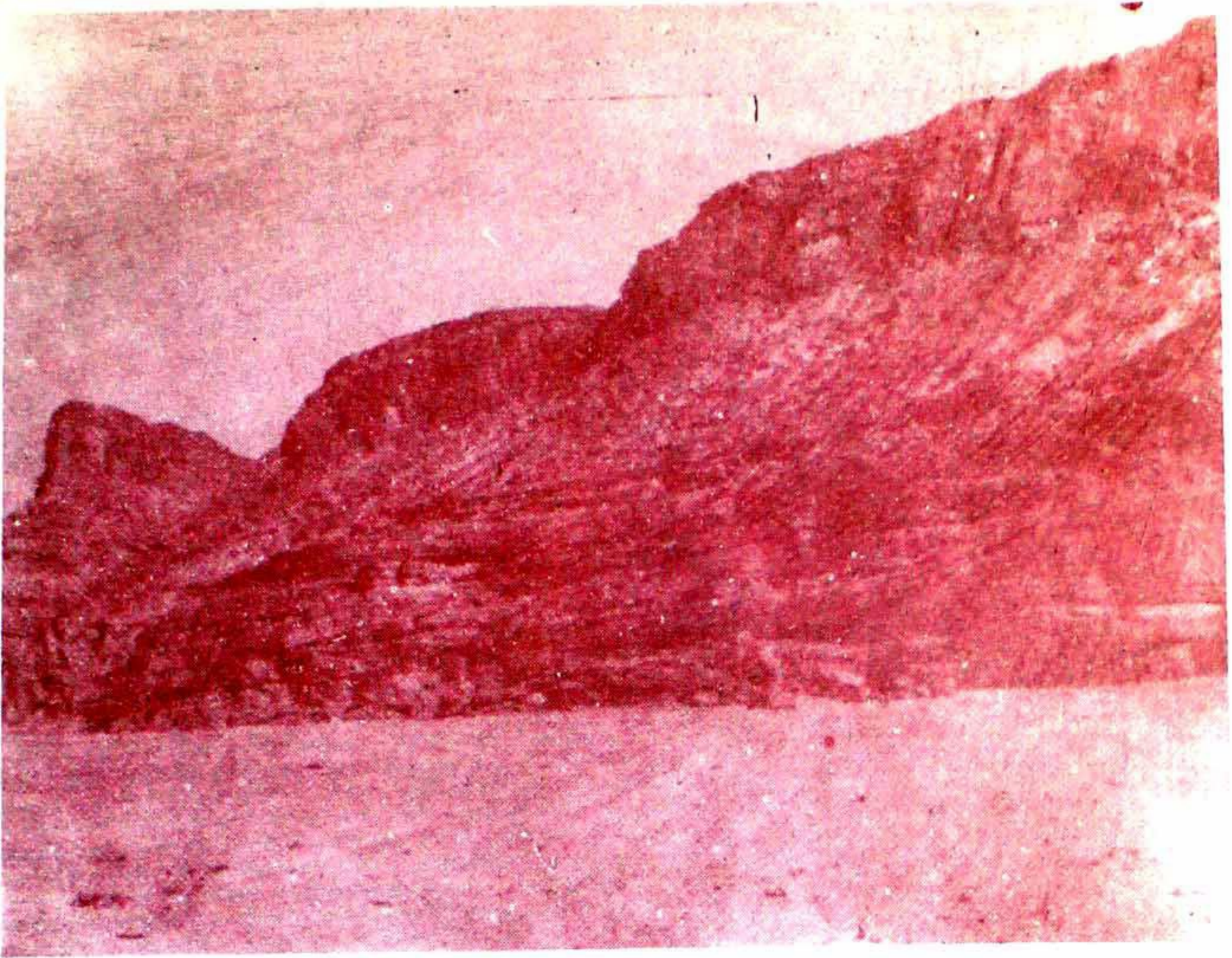
96. According to the Qur'ān, the people of Prophet Ṣāliḥ themselves admitted that he was a man of great integrity and extraordinary calibre: "They said, 'O Ṣāliḥ, till now you were such a person among us of whom we had great expectation's.'" (Hūd : 62).

97. That is, "Do you consider that your life of indulgence and pleasure is everlasting, and you will never be asked to account for Allah's favours to you and for your own misdeeds?"

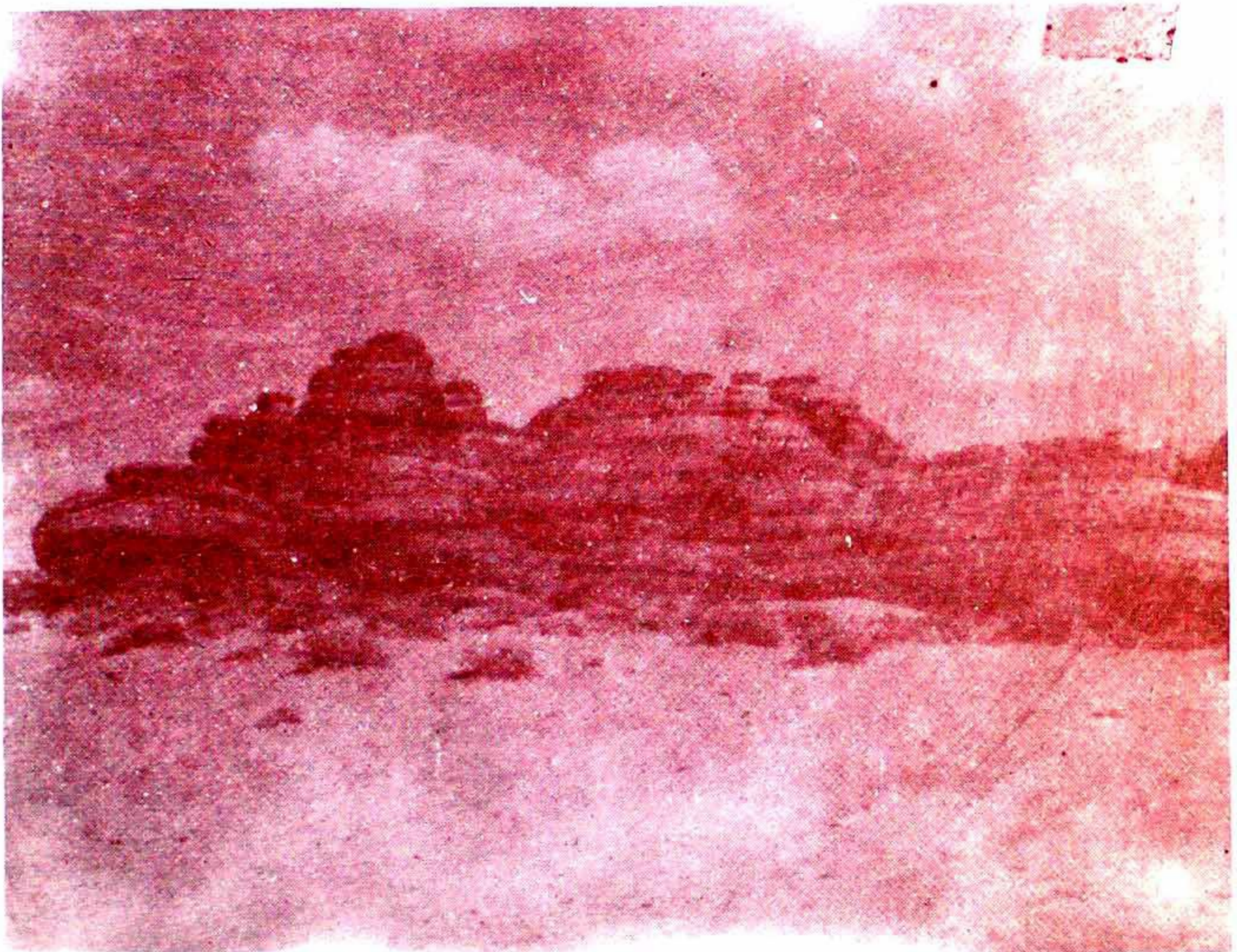
98. *Hadīm* : heavy bunches of ripe, juicy and soft date-palm fruit hanging from trees.

99. Just as the most prominent feature of the 'Ād civilization was that they built large edifices with high pillars, so the most prominent feature of the Thamūd civilization for which they were known among the ancient peoples was that they carved out dwellings in the hills. That is why in Sūrah Fajr, the 'Ād have been referred to as "(people) of the pillars", and the Thamūd as "those who hewed rocks in the valley". These people also built castles on the plains, the purpose and object of which was nothing but display of wealth and power and architectural skill as there was no real necessity for them. These are, in fact, the ways of the perverted people: the poor among them do not have proper shelters, and the wealthy members not only have sufficient fine dwellings but over and above those they raise monuments for ostentation and display.

Some of these Thamūdic works exist even today, which I have seen in December, 1959. (See pictures). This place is situated between Al-Madīnah and Tabūk, a few miles to the north of Al-'Ulā (Wād-il-Qurā of the Holy Prophet's time) in Ḥejāz. The local inhabitants call it Al-Ḥijr and Madā'in Ṣāliḥ even today. Al-'Ulā is still a green and fertile valley abounding in water springs and gardens, but Al-Ḥijr appears to be an abandoned place. It has thin population, little greenery and a few wells one of which is said to be the one at which Prophet Ṣāliḥ's she-camel used to drink water. This well is now dry and located within a deserted military post of the time of the Turks. When we entered this territory and approached Al-'Ulā, we found hills which seemed to have been shattered to pieces from top to bottom as if by a violent earthquake. (See pictures on the opposite pages). We saw the same kind of hills

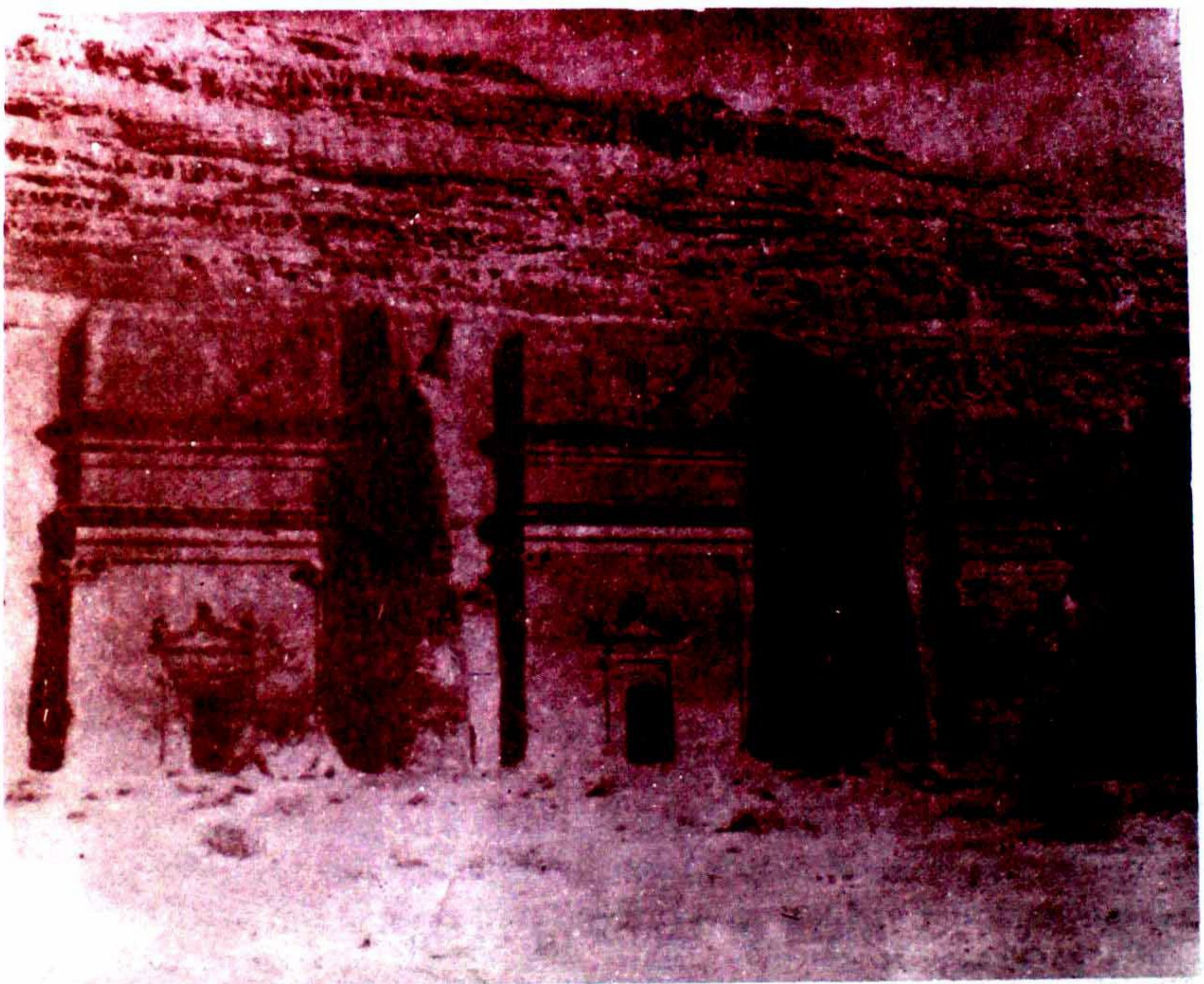
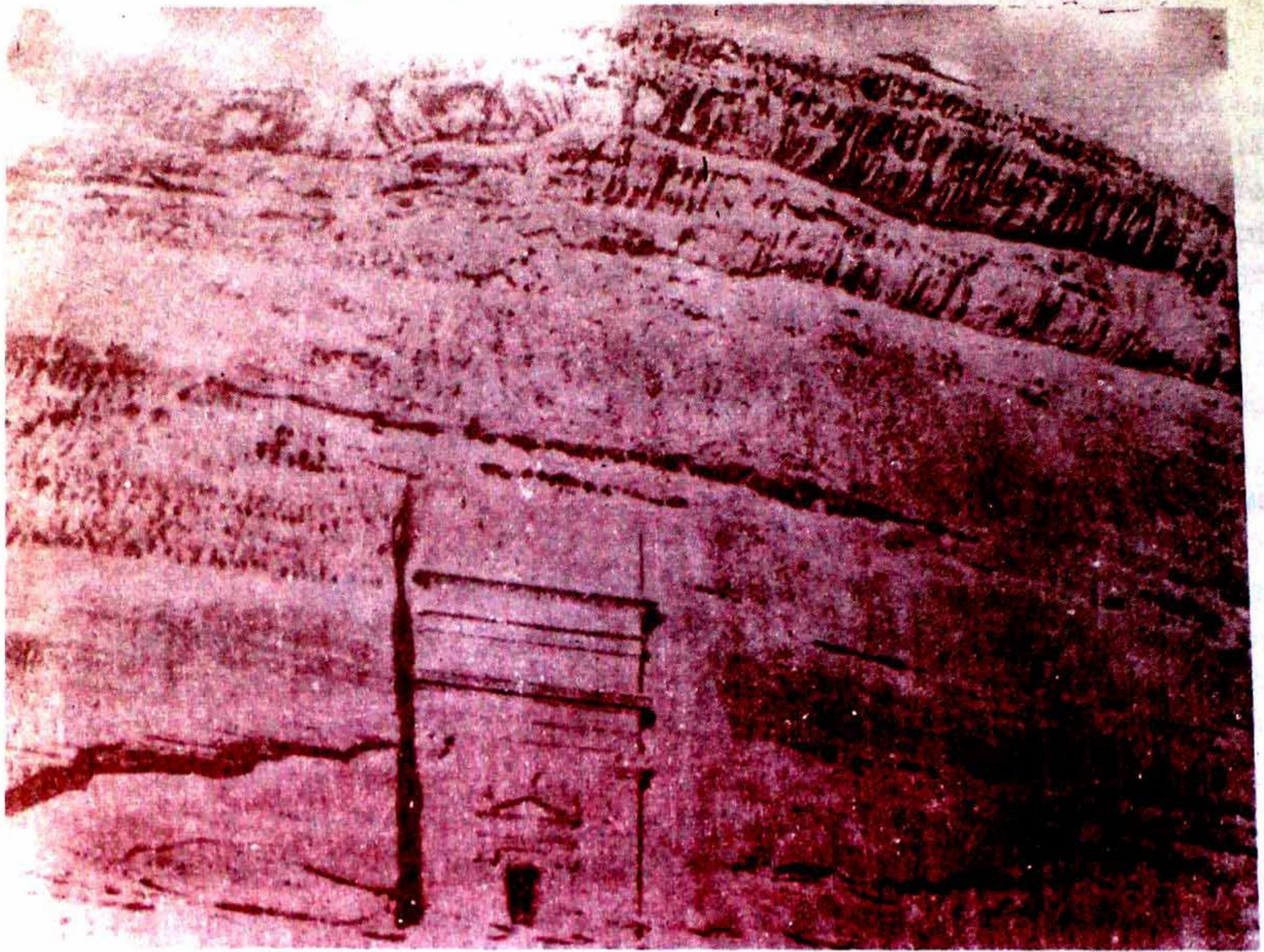


HILLS OF AL-'ULĀ

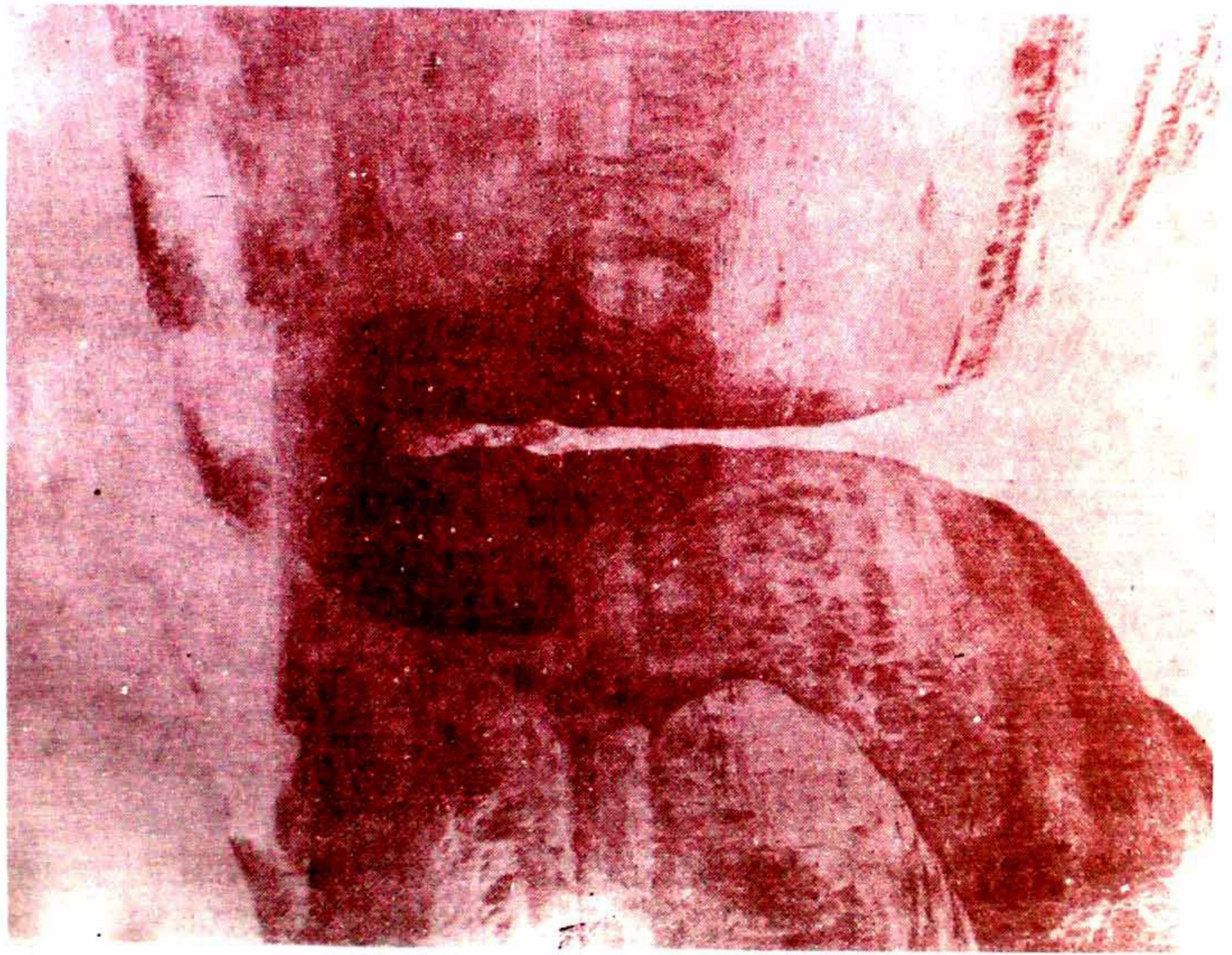
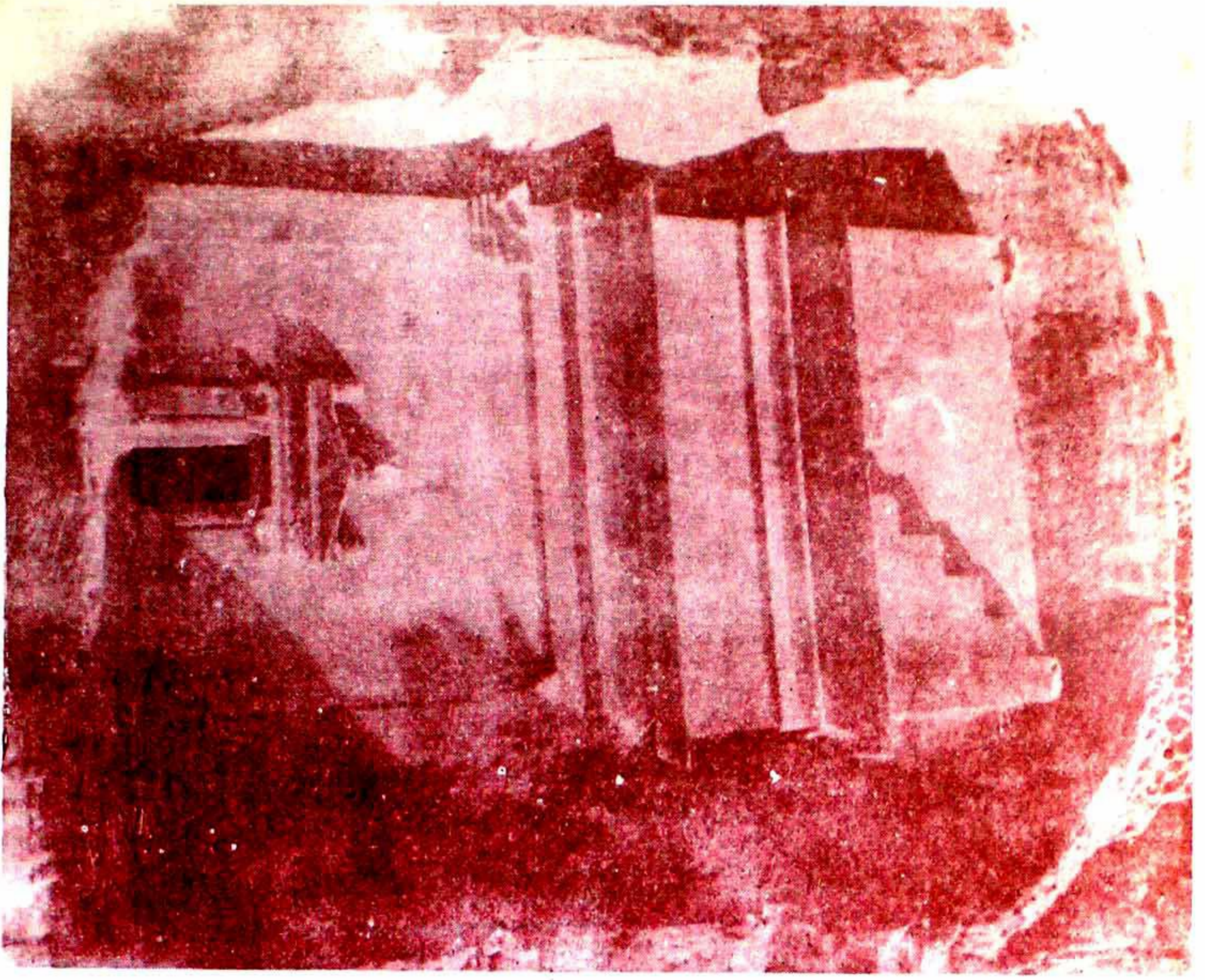


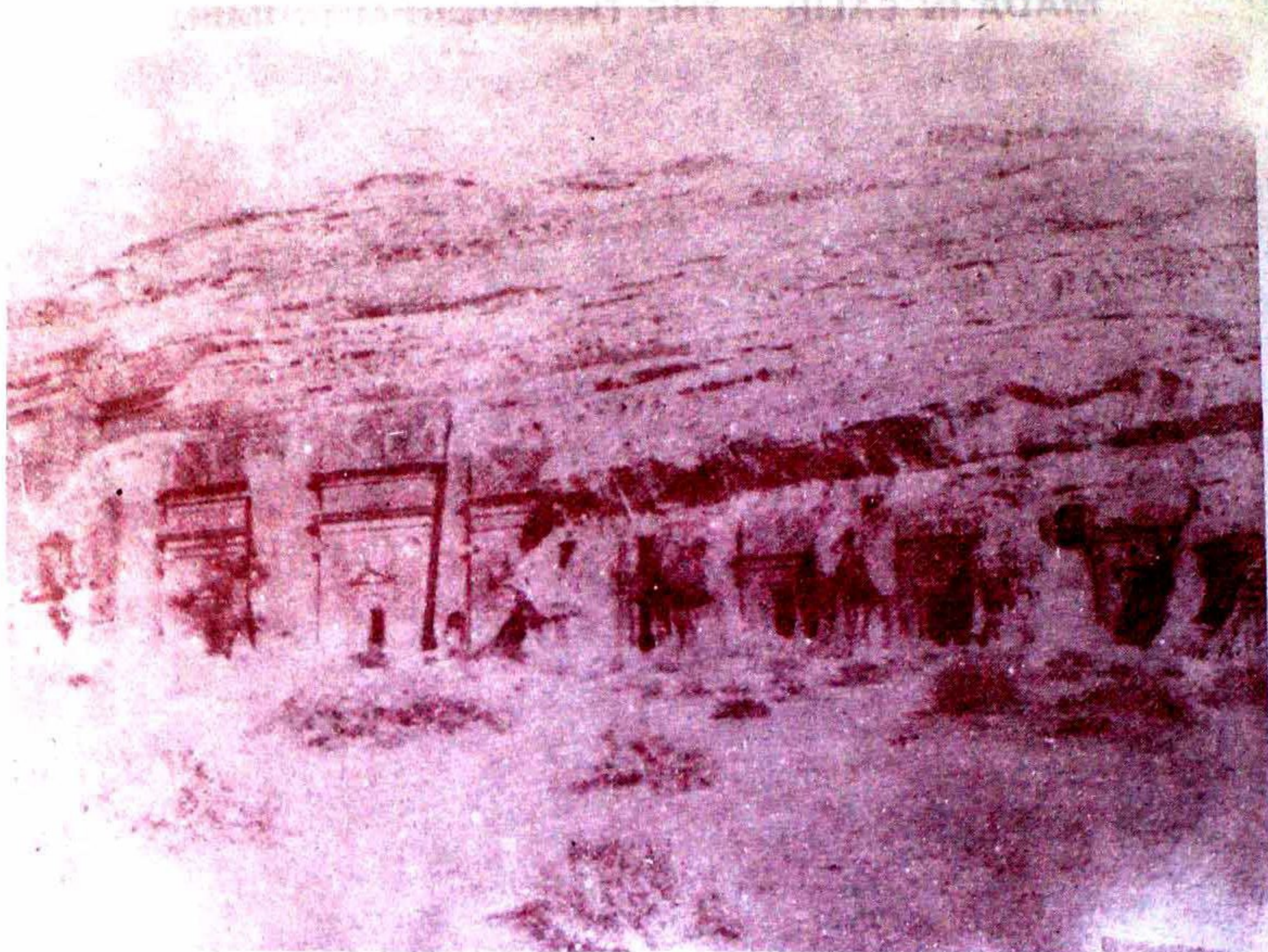
HILLS OF MADĀ' IN SĀLIH

ʿIN ṢĀLIḤ : THE THAMŪDIC MONUMENTS

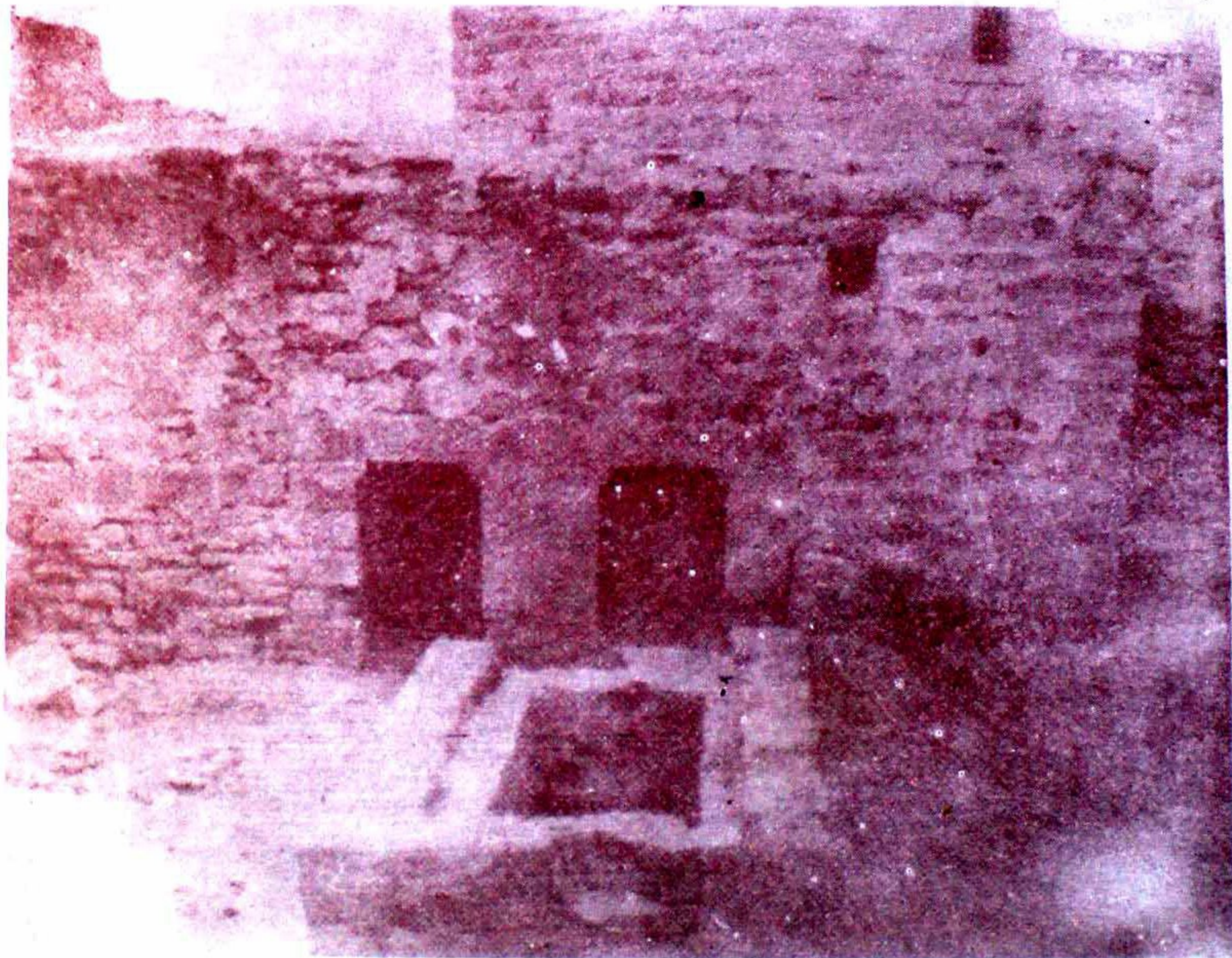


MADĀ'IN ṢĀLIḤ : THE THAMŪDIC MONUMENTS



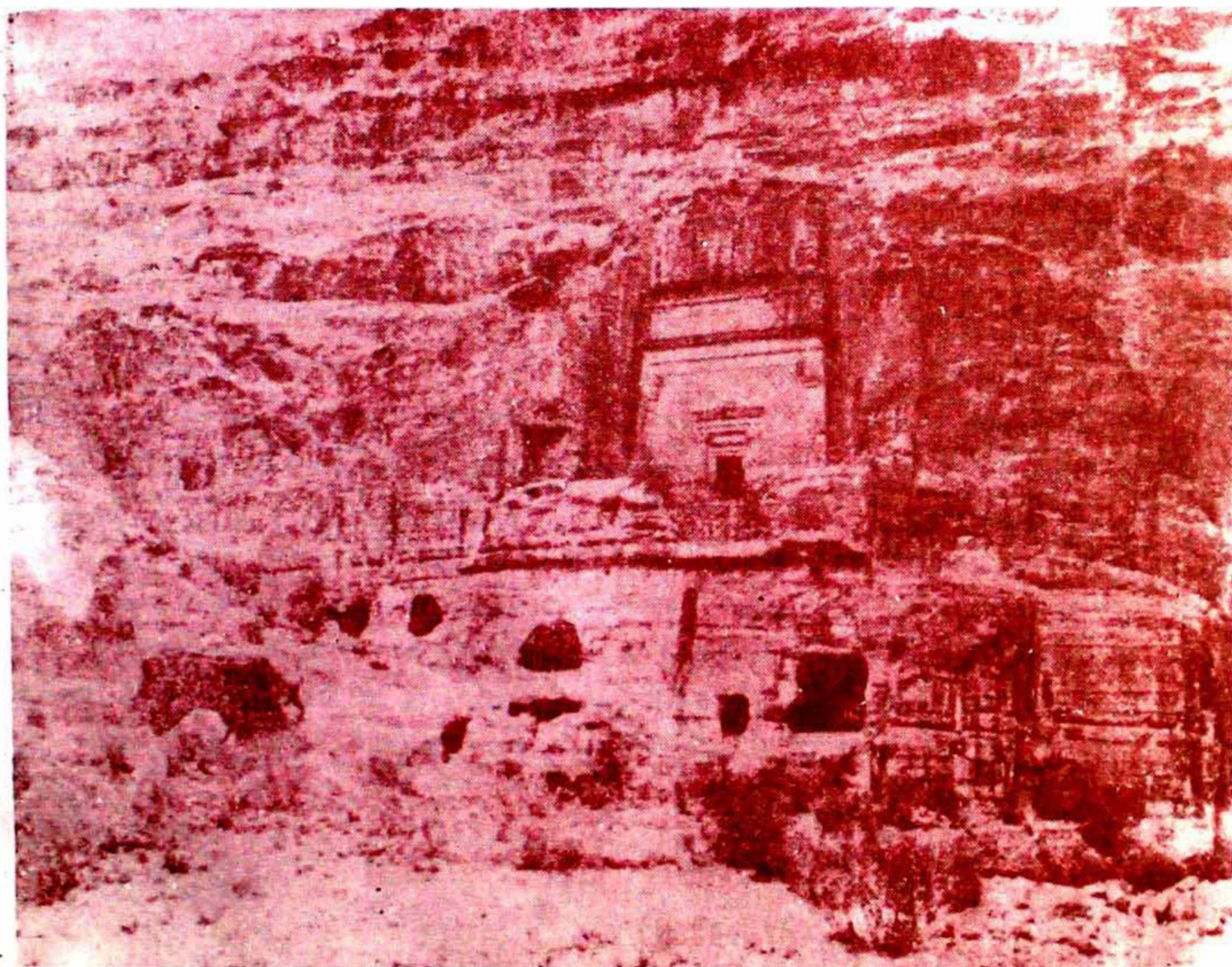
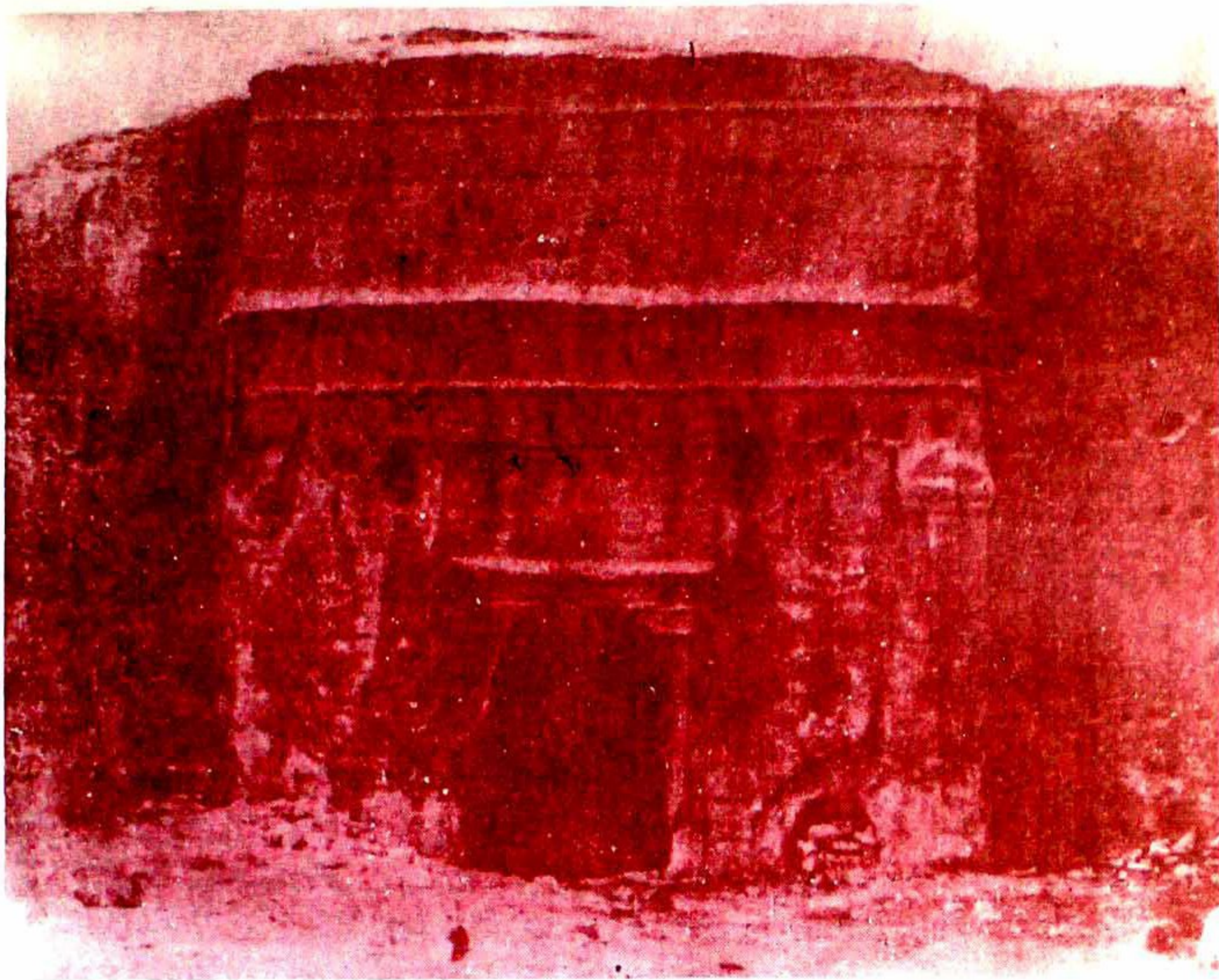


MADĀ'IN ŠĀLIḤ : THE THAMŪDIC MONUMENTS

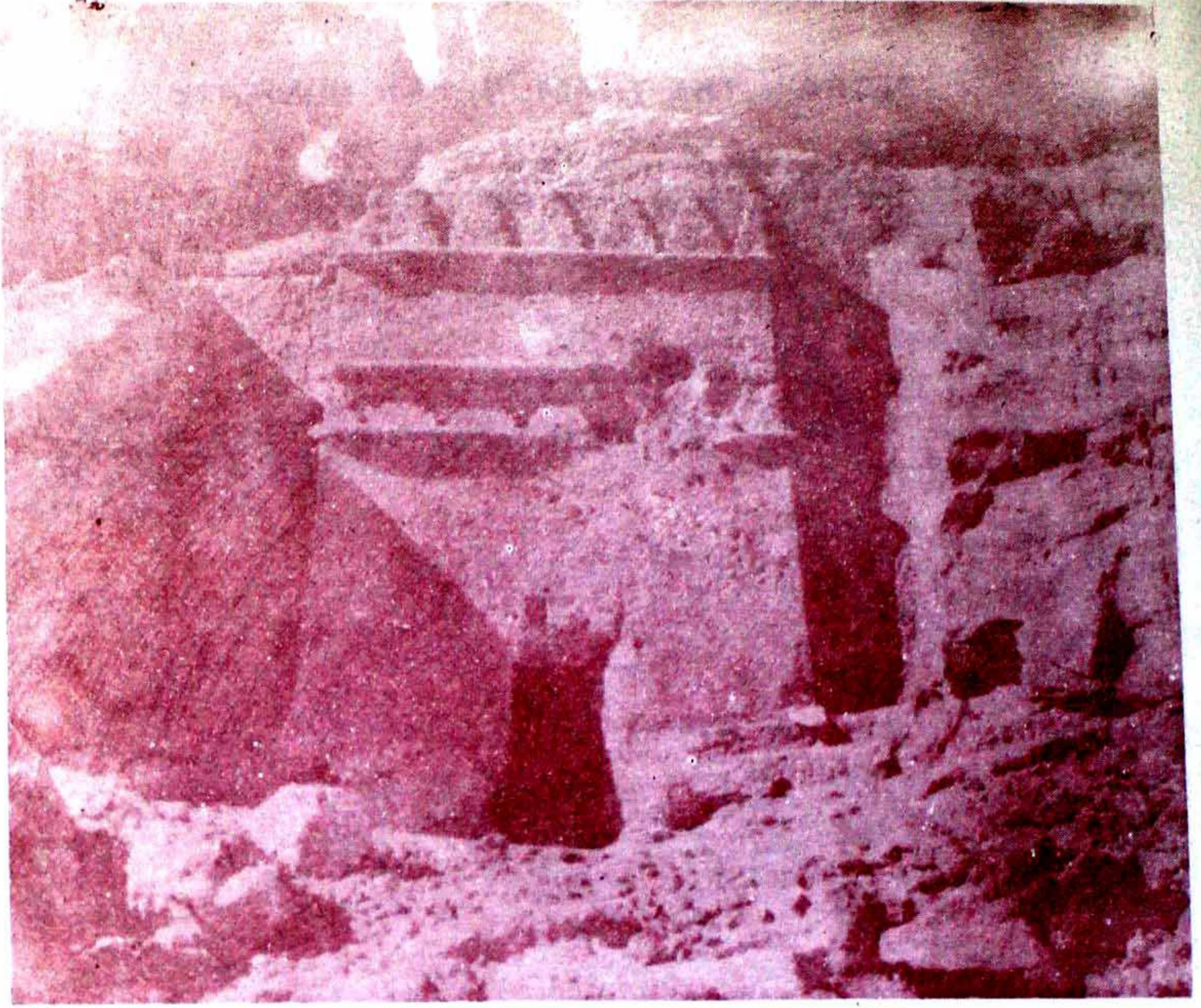


**MADĀ'IN ŠĀLIḤ : THE WELL AT WHICH THE
PROPHET ŠĀLIḤ'S SHE-CAMEL USED TO DRINK
WATER.**

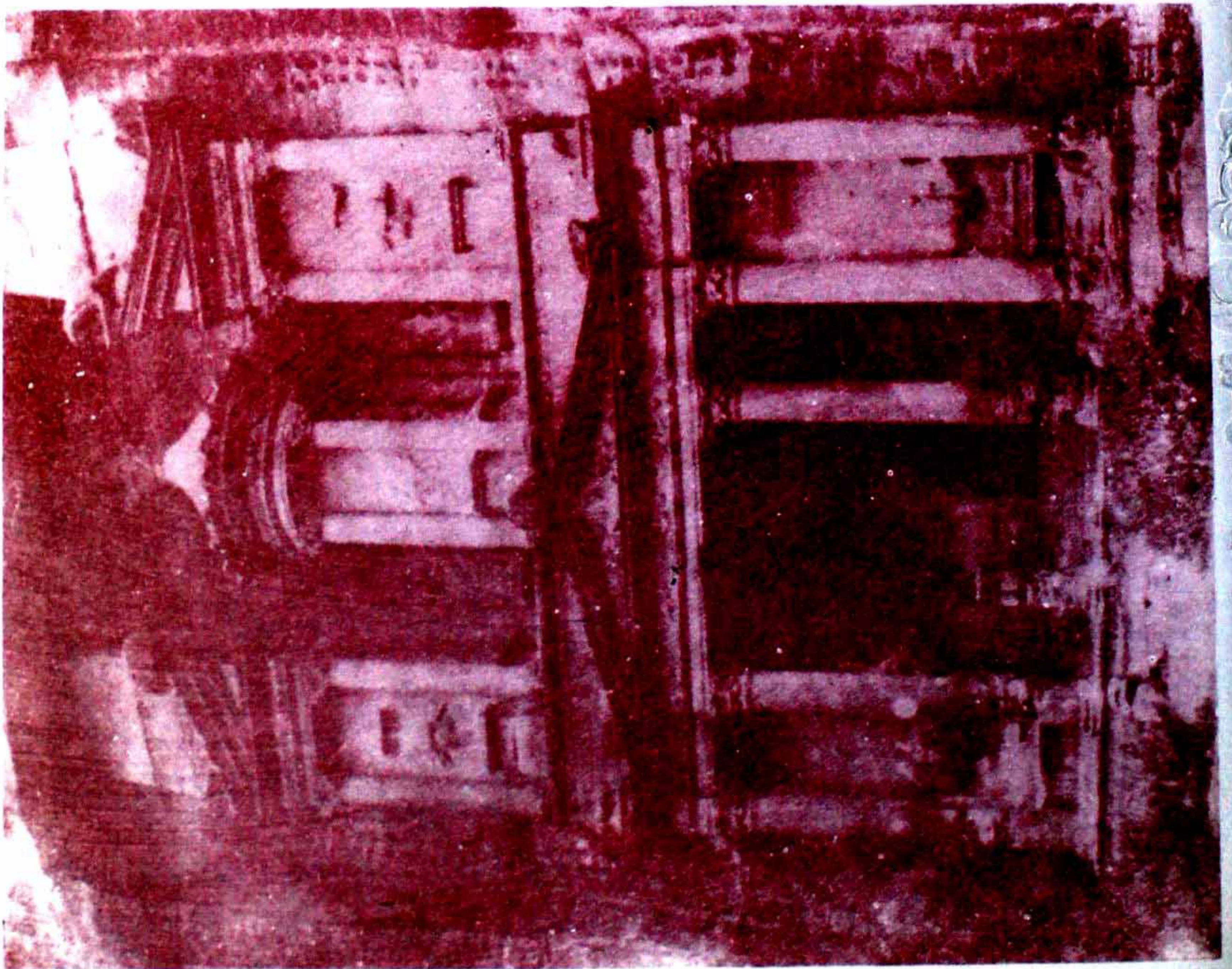
PETRA: THE THAMŪDIC MONUMENTS



A THAMŪDIC MONUMENT AT MADYAN



A NABATAEAN MONUMENT AT PETRA



while travelling to the east, from Al-'Ulā to Khaibar, for about 50 miles, and towards the north inside Jordan, for about 30 to 40 miles. This indicated that an area, stretching well over 300 to 400 miles in length and 100 miles in width, had been devastated by the terrible earthquake.

A few of the Thamūdic type monuments that we saw at Al-Hijr were also found at Madyan along the Gulf of 'Aqabah and at Petra in Jordan. At Petra specially the Thamūdic and Nabataean works stand side by side, and their styles and architectural designs are so different that anyone who examines them will find that they were neither built in the same age nor by the same nation. (See pictures for contrast). Daughy, the British orientalist, in his attempt to prove the Qur'ān as false, has claimed that the works found at Al-Hijr were not carved out by Thamūd but by the Nabataeans. I am of the view that the art of carving houses out of the rocks started with the Thamūd, and thousands of years later, in the second and first centuries B.C., it was considerably developed by the Nabataeans and it reached perfection in the works of the caves of Ellora, which were carved out about 700 years after Petra.

100. That is, "You should give up obedience to your chiefs, guides and rulers under whose leadership you are following an evil way of life. These people have transgressed all bounds of morality: they cannot bring about any reforms and they will corrupt every system of life that they adopt. The only way for you towards success and well-being is that you should inculcate fear of God, give up obedience to the misguides and obey me, because I am God's Messenger: you are fully aware of my honesty and integrity: I have no personal interest and motive for undertaking the work of reform."

This was in short the manifesto which Prophet Ṣāliḥ presented before his people: it not only contained the religious message but invitation to cultural, moral and political revolution as well.

101. "Enchanted person": Mad and insane person who has lost reasoning power. According to the ancient conceptions, madness was either due to the influence of a jinn or magic. That is why a mad person was either called *majnūn* (one under the influence of a jinn) or one enchanted by magic.

102. That is, "We cannot believe you to be a Messenger from God because you are just like us and we see no distinction in you. However, if you are true in your claim that God has appointed you as His Messenger, you should present such a clear miracle as should make us believe that you have really been sent by the Creator and Master of the universe."

103. From the context it appears that it was not a common she-

[Contd. on p. 258

الذِّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَتَدْرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَلْ
 أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ قَالُوا لَيْنَ لَوْ تَنْتَهَى يَلُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾
 قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْقَالِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَآهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَنجَّيْنَاهُ
 وَآهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَيْرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ وَآمَطْنَا
 عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِمَنْ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ

مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥٣﴾ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ لَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾
 ٩
 ع ١٦
 ١٣

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ
 أَطِيعُوا أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ
 وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي
 خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ الْأُولَى ﴿١٥٩﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمَسْحُورِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا
 بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَاسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ
 كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّيَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ
 عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا

كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ
 رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٦٨﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾
 بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ
 يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَى بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَقَرَأَهُ
 عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ كَذَلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ لَا

Do you go to the males from the creatures of the world,¹⁰⁸ and leave that which your Lord has created for you in your wives?¹⁰⁹ You have indeed transgressed all limits."¹¹⁰ They said, "O Lot, if you do not desist from this, you will surely be included among those who have been expelled from our towns."¹¹¹ He said, "I am certainly one of those who abhor your wickedness. My Lord, deliver me and my people from their wicked deeds."¹¹² At last, We delivered him and all his people except an old woman who was of those who were left behind.¹¹³ Then We destroyed all the rest of them, and rained on them a horrible rain, which fell on those who had been warned.¹¹⁴

Indeed there is a Sign in this, but most of these people would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful. 174-175

The people of Aiykah rejected the Messengers.¹¹⁵ Remember the time when Shu'aib said to them, "Do you not fear? I am a Messenger to you worthy of full trust: so fear Allah and obey me. I do not ask of you any reward for this duty, for my reward is with the Lord of the worlds. Give full measure and do not give people less than what is due to them; weigh with even balance and do not cheat people of their goods; and do not spread evil in the land, and fear Him Who has created you and those who have gone before you." They said, "You are only an enchanted person and are no more than a man like us: we consider you to be an utter liar. However, if you are truthful, cause a fragment of the sky to fall down upon us." Shu'aib said, "My Lord knows whatever you are doing."¹¹⁶ They treated him as a liar. At last, the torment of the Day of Canopy overtook them,¹¹⁷ and it was the torment of an extremely dreadful day. 176-189

Indeed there is a Sign in this, but most of these people would not believe. The fact is that your Lord is Mighty as well as Merciful. 190-191

This¹¹⁸ (Book) has been revealed by the Lord of the 192-200

worlds.¹¹⁹ The trustworthy Spirit¹²⁰ has come down with it upon your heart so that you may become one of those who are (appointed by God) to warn (the people) in plain Arabic language;¹²¹ and this is also contained in the Scriptures of the former people.¹²² Is it not a Sign for the people (of Makkah) that the learned men of the Children of Israel know it?¹²³ (But they are obdurate to the extent) that even if We had sent it down to some non-Arab, and he had recited this (discourse in lucid Arabic) before them, they would still not have believed in it.¹²⁴ Likewise, We have caused this (Qur'ān) to pass through the hearts of the criminals:¹²⁵

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camel, but it was brought about in a supernatural manner because it was presented in response to the demand for a miracle. Prophet Ṣāliḥ could not have produced before the people an ordinary she-camel as a proof of his Prophethood because that would not have satisfied them. At other places in the Qur'ān it has been clearly referred to as a miracle. In Sūrah Al-A'rāf and Hūd it has been said: "...here is Allah's she-camel, a Sign for you." (VII : 73) In Sūrah Banī Isra'il the same thing has been stated more emphatically: "And nothing has hindered Us from sending Signs except that the former people refused to acknowledge them as such. (For example) We sent the she-camel as an open Sign to Thamūd but they treated her with cruelty; whereas We send Signs only by way of warning." (v. 59) Moreover, the challenge given to the wicked people of Thamūd, after presenting the she-camel before them, was such that it could only be given after presenting a miracle.

104. That is, "One day the she-camel will drink water all alone at your wells and springs, and one day you and your animals will take water, and this arrangement will not be violated in any way." There could hardly be a greater challenge for the people of Arabia, for taking of water had been the foremost cause of feuds and fights among them, which mostly resulted in bloodshed, even loss of life. As such, the challenge given by Prophet Ṣāliḥ was indeed a challenge to the whole nation, which could not be acceptable unless the people were sure that the challenger had a great power at his back. But Prophet Ṣāliḥ threw this challenge all by himself without any worldly power behind him, and

the whole nation not only received it quietly, but also abided by it submissively for quite some days.

In Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and Hūd there is an addition to this: "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 an evil intention." (XI : 64) That is, the challenge was not only this that the she-camel would drink water all alone every alternate day, but, in addition, she would freely move about and graze at will in their fields and gardens and palm groves and pastures and was not to be touched with an evil intention.

105. This does not mean that as soon as they heard the challenge, they attacked the she-camel at once and hamstrung her. Actually, when the she-camel became a problem for the whole nation, the hearts of the people were filled with rage, and they began to hold lengthy consultations as to how to get rid of her. At last, a haughty chief undertook the task of putting an end to her, as mentioned in Sūrah Ash-Shams thus: "When arose the most villainous of the people.. ." (v. 12) and in Sūrah Al-Qamar thus: "They appealed to their companion, so he took up the responsibility and hamstrung (her)." (v. 29).

106. As stated at other places in the Qur'ān, when the she-camel was killed, Prophet Ṣāliḥ declared: "You have only three more days to enjoy yourselves in your houses." (Hūd : 65) When this time limit came to an end, a shocking explosion took place in the night at about dawn, followed by a violent earthquake, which destroyed the whole nation completely. In the morning their dead bodies lay scattered here and there like dry pieces of bush trampled down by animals around an enclosure. Neither their stony castles nor their rock-hewn caves could protect them against the calamity. "We sent against them a single blast and they became as the trampled twigs of the fence of a fold-builder." (Al-Qamar: 31). "Consequently a shocking catastrophe overtook them and they lay lifeless in their dwellings." (Al-A'rāf : 78). "At last a violent blast overtook them with the approach of the morning, and all that they had achieved proved of no avail to them."

(Al-Hijr: 83, 84).

107. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf : 80-84, Hūd : 74-83, Al-Hijr: 57-77, Al-Anbiyāa' : 71-75, An-Naml ; 54-58. Al-'Ankabūt : 28-35, Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 133-138 and Al-Qamar : 33-39.

108. This can have two meanings: (1) Of all the creatures you have chosen males only for the purpose of gratifying your sex desires, whereas there are plenty of women in the world; and (2) You alone are the people in the whole world, who go to men to satisfy the sex desires; even the animals do not resort to this. This second meaning has been explained in Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and Al-'Ankabūt thus: "Have you become

so shameless that you commit such indecent acts as no one committed before you in the world?" (Al-A'rāf : 80).

109. This can also have two meanings: (1) "You leave your wives whom God has created for you to satisfy your sex desire and adopt unnatural ways with the males for the purpose." (2) "Even with respect to your wives you do not follow the natural way but adopt unnatural ways for the gratification of your lust?" This they might have been doing with the intention of family planning.

110. That is, "This is not the only vice in you; your whole lives have become corrupted and perverted, as stated in An-Naml : 54 thus: "Do you commit indecent acts openly and publicly?" And in Al-'Ankabūt: 29 thus: "Have you become so perverted that you gratify your lust with the males, you rob travellers, and you commit wicked deeds publicly in your assemblies?" For further details, see E.N. 39 of Al-Hijr.

111. That is, "You know that whosoever has spoken against us, or protested against our doings, or opposed us in any way, he has been turned out of our habitations. If you also behave like that, you too will be treated likewise." It has been stated in Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and An-Naml that before giving this warning to Prophet Lot, the wicked people had decided to "turn out these people of your habitations for they pose to be very pious." (VII: 82).

112. This may also mean: "My Lord, deliver us from the evil consequences of their misdeeds," and also this: "Protect the children of the believers from the evil effects of the immoral acts of the wicked people."

113. This refers to the Prophet Lot's wife as stated in verse 10 of Sūrah Tahrim about the wives of Prophets Noah and Lot: "These two women were in the houses of Our two pious servants but they acted treacherously towards them." That is, they did not believe, and sided with the unbelievers instead of their righteous husbands. Therefore, when Allah decreed to send a torment on the people of Lot, He commanded Lot to leave the place along with his people but to leave his wife behind: "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; but your wife (who will not accompany you) shall meet the same doom as they." (Hūd: 81).

114. This was not a rain of water but a rain of stones. According to the details given at other places in the Qur'ān, when Prophet Lot had left the place along with the people of his household in the last hours of the night, there occurred a terrible explosion at dawn and a violent earthquake, which turned all their habitations upside down and rained on them stones of baked clay as a result of a volcanic

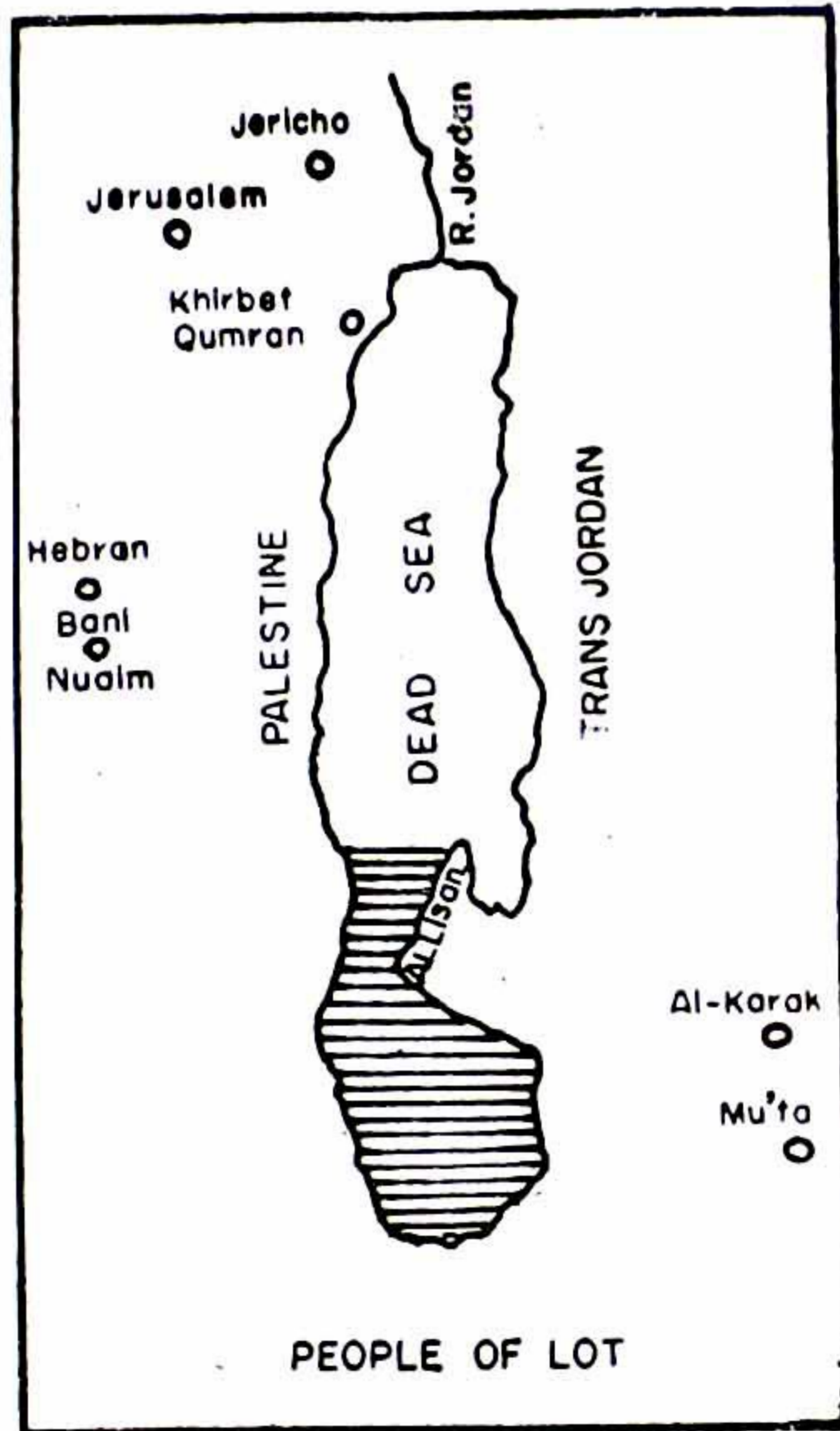
eruption and a strong blast of wind.

Below we give a resume of the Biblical account and of ancient Greek and Latin writings and modern geological researches and archaeological observations about the torment and the place where it occurred:

The hundreds of ruins found in the waste and uninhabited land lying to the south and east of the Dead Sea indicate that this must have been a prosperous and thickly populated area in the past. The archaeologists have estimated that the age of prosperity of this land lasted between 2300 and 1900 B.C. According to historians, Prophet Abraham lived about 2000 B.C. Thus the archaeological evidence confirms that this land was destroyed in the time of Prophet Abraham and his nephew Prophet Lot.

The most populous and fertile part of the area was "the vale of Siddim" as mentioned in the Bible:

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt." (Gen. 13 : 10) The present-day scholars are of the opinion that that valley is now under the Dead Sea and this opinion is supported by firm archaeological evidence. In the ancient times the Dead Sea did not so much extend to the south as it does today. Opposite and to the west of the present Jordanian city of Al-Karak, there is a small peninsula called Al-Lisān. This was the end of the sea in ancient days. The area to the south of it, which is now under sea water (the shaded portion in the map) was a fertile valley, "the vale of Siddim", in which were situated Sodom,



Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, Zoar, the famous cities of the people of Lot. In about 2000 B.C. this valley sank as a result of a violent earthquake and was submerged in sea water. Even today this is the most shallow part of the Sea. In the Roman period it was more so and was fordable from Al-Lisān to the western coast. One can still see

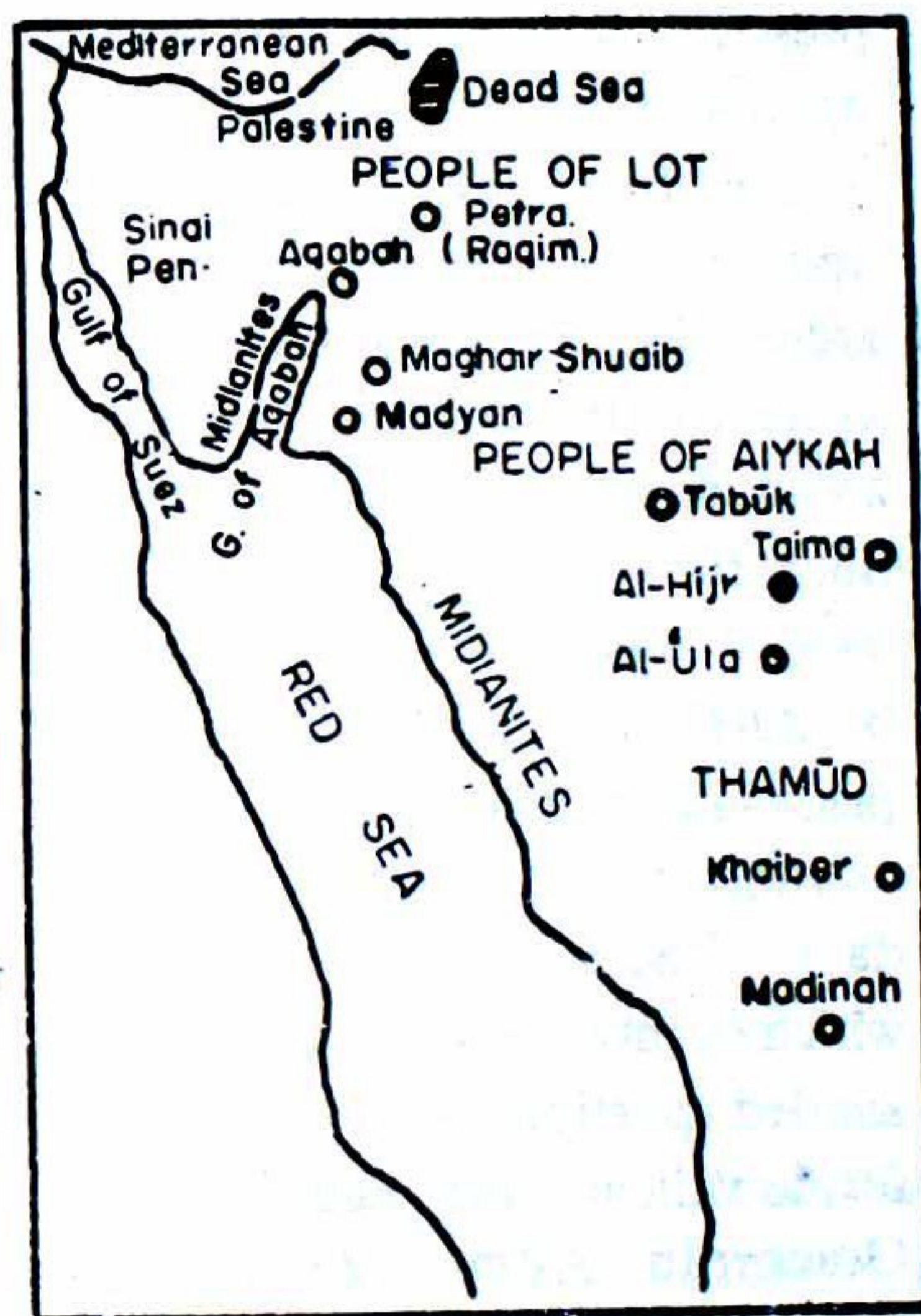
submerged jungles along the southern coast and there might as well be submerged buildings.

According to the Bible and the ancient Greek and Latin writings, the region abounded in pits of petroleum and asphalt and at places inflammable gas also existed. It appears from the geological observations that with the violent earthquake shocks, petroleum, gases and asphalt were thrown up and ignited, and the whole region exploded like a bomb. The Bible says that when Prophet Abraham got the news and went from Hebron to see the affected valley, he saw that "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." (Gen. 19 : 28).

115. The people of Aiykah have been briefly mentioned in vv. 78-84 of Sūrah Al-Ḥijr. More about them here. There is a difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether the Midianites and the people of Aiykah were two different tribes or one and the same people. One group holds that they were different tribes and gives the argument that in Sūrah Al-A'rāf Prophet Shu'aib has been called "brother of the Midianites" (v. 85), whereas here, with regard to the people of Aiykah, he has not been called so. The other group holds that they were one and the same people on the ground that the moral diseases and characteristics mentioned of the Midianites in Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and Hūd are the same as of the people of Aiykah mentioned here. Then the message and admonition of Prophet Shu'aib to both the tribes was the same, and the two tribes also met the same end.

Research in this regard has shown that both the views are correct. The Midianites and the people of Aiykah were doubtless two different tribes but branches of the same stock. The progeny of Prophet Abraham from his wife (or slave girl) Keturah, is well known in Arabia and in the history of the Israelites as the children of Keturah. Their most prominent branch was the one which became famous as the Midianites, after their ancestor, Midian, son of Abraham. They had settled in the

territory between northern Arabia and southern Palestine, and along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Gulf of 'Aqabah. Their capital



city was Madyan, which was situated, according to Abul Fidā, on the western coast of the Gulf of 'Aqabah at five days' journey from Aiylah (present-day 'Aqabah). The rest of the children of Keturah, among whom the Dedanites are comparatively better known, settled in the territory between Taimā' and Tabūk and Al-'Ulā in northern Arabia, their main city being Tabūk, the Aiykah of the ancient times. (Yaqūt in his *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, under Aiykah, writes that this is the old name of Tabūk, and the natives of Tabūk confirm this).

The reason why one and the same Prophet was sent to the Midianites and the people of Aiykah was probably this that both the tribes were descendents of the same ancestors, spoke the same language and had settled in the adjoining areas. It is just possible that they lived side by side in the same areas and had marriage and other social relations between them. Then, these two branches were traders by profession and had developed similar evil practices and social and moral weaknesses. According to the early books of the Bible, these people worshipped Baal-peor. When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt and entered their territory, they also became infected with the evils of idolatry and adultery. (Numbers, 25 : 1-5, 31 : 16-17). Then those people had settled on the two main international trade routes, the one joining Yaman with Syria and the other the Persian Gulf with Egypt. Due to their advantageous position they had started big scale highway robbery and would not let any caravan pass till it had paid heavy taxes. They had thus rendered these trade routes highly unsafe. Their characteristic of highway robbery has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, for which they were admonished through Prophet Shu'aib, thus: "And do not lie in ambush by every path (of life) as robbers in order to frighten the people." (Al-A'rāf : 86). These were the reasons why Allah sent to both the tribes the same Prophet, who conveyed to them the same teachings and message. For the details of the story of Prophet Shu'aib and the Midianites, see Al-A'rāf: 85-93, Hūd: 84-95, Al-'Ankabūt: 36-37.

116. That is, "It is not in my power to bring down the torment; it is in Allah's power, and He is fully aware of your misdeeds. He will send down the torment as and when He wills." In this demand of the people of Aiykah and the answer of Prophet Shu'aib to them there was an admonition for the Quraish as well. They also demanded from the Holy Prophet to bring down the torment on them: "Or.. you cause the sky to fall down on us in fragments, as you threaten

us.” (Bani Isra'il: 92). As such the Quraish are being told that the people of Aiykah had also demanded a similar thing from their Prophet, and the answer that they got from their Prophet is the answer of Muḥammad (Allah's peace be on him) to you.

117. The details of this torment are neither found in the Qur'ān nor in any authentic Tradition. What one can learn from the Text is this: As these people had demanded a torment from the sky, Allah sent upon them a cloud which hung over them like a canopy and kept hanging until they were completely destroyed by the torment of continuous rain. The Qur'ān clearly points out that the nature of the torment sent upon the Midianites was different from that sent upon the people of Aiykah. The people of Aiykah, as mentioned here, were destroyed by the torment of the Canopy, while the torment visiting the Midianites was in the form of a terrible earthquake: “It so happened that a shocking catastrophe overtook them and they remained lying prostrate in their dwellings.” (Al-A'rāf: 91). And: “A dreadful shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes.” (Hūd: 94). Therefore, it is wrong to regard the two torments as identical. Some commentators have given a few explanations of “the torment of the Day of Canopy”, but we do not know the source of their information. Ibn Jarīr has quoted Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās as saying: “If somebody from among the scholars gives you an explanation of the torment of the Day of Canopy, do not consider it as correct.”

118. At the end of the historical account, the same theme, with which the Sūrah began, is resumed. For reference, see vv. 1-9.

119. That is, “This lucid Book whose verses are being recited to you, and this 'Admonition' from which the people are turning away, is not the product of the whims of a man; it has not been written and compiled by Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) himself, but it consists of the Revelations of the Lord of this universe.”

120. That is, Angel Gabriel, as mentioned in Al-Baqarah : 97 : “Say to them, 'Whoever is the enemy to Gabriel, he should understand that he has, by Allah's Command, revealed to your heart the Qur'ān'.” Here the object of using the title of “the trustworthy Spirit” for Gabriel implies that the Qur'ān is not being sent down by Allah through some material agency, which is subject to change and vacillation; but through a pure Spirit, having no tinge of materialism, and who is perfectly trustworthy. This Spirit conveys the Messages of Allah precisely in the same form and with the same content as they are entrusted to him: it is not possible for him to tamper with the Messages, or to make his own additions to them in any way.

121. This sentence may be related to: “. . . the trustworthy Spirit has

come down" and also to: "...who are (appointed by God) to warn." In the first case, it will mean that the trustworthy Spirit has brought it down in plain Arabic language, and in the second case, it will mean that the Holy Prophet is included among those Prophets who were appointed to warn the people in the Arabic language, *i.e.*, Hūd, Šāliḥ, Ishmael and Shu'aib (Allah's peace be upon them). In both cases the object is the same: the Divine Message has not been sent down in a dead or mysterious language, or in a language of riddles and enigmas, but in such clear and lucid Arabic, which can be understood easily by every Arab and every non-Arab who has learnt Arabic. As such, the people who are turning away from it, cannot have the excuse that they could not understand the message of the Qur'ān. The only reason of their denial and aversion is that they are afflicted with the same disease with which Pharaoh, the people of Abraham, the people of Noah, the people of Lot, the 'Ād and the Thamūd, and the people of Aiykah were afflicted.

122. That is, this very Admonition and Divine Message and teachings are contained in the former Scriptures also. The same message of submission to One God, the same belief in the Hereafter and the same invitation to follow the Prophets has been given in all those Books. All the Books sent down by God condemn *shirk* and the materialistic philosophy of life and invite people to accept the true and sound philosophy of life, which is based on the concept of man's accountability before God, and demands that man should give up his independence in deference to Divine Commands brought and preached by the Prophets. None of these things is new, which the Qur'ān may be presenting for the first time, and none can blame the Holy Prophet of saying something which had never been said before by the former Prophets.

Among other arguments this verse also is quoted in support of Imām Abū Hanīfah's early opinion that if a person recites the translation of the Qur'ān in the prayer, his prayer will be in order and valid, whether he is able to recite the Qur'ān in Arabic or not. According to 'Allāma Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, the basis of this argument is this: "Allah says that the Qur'ān was contained in the former Scriptures also; obviously this could not be in Arabic words. As such, if translated and presented in another language, it will still be the Qur'ān." (Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān, Vol. III, p. 429). But the weakness of this argument is obvious. The Qur'ān, or any other Divine Book, was never revealed in a manner that Allah inspired the Prophet with its meaning and then he presented it before the people in his own words. The fact is that every Book, in whatever language it came, was revealed in Divine words and meanings together. As such, the teachings of the Qur'ān were con-

tained in the former Scriptures in Divine words and not in human, and none of their translations could be considered as the Divine Book or its representation. As regards the Qur'ān, it has been stated over and over again that it was literally revealed in the Arabic language: "We have sent it down as Qur'ān in Arabic". (Yūsuf: 2). "We have sent this Command in Arabic to you." (Ar-Ra'd: 37). "An Arabic Qur'ān without any crookedness." (Az-Zumar: 28). Then just before this verse, it has been said that the trustworthy Spirit has brought it down in Arabic. Now how can it be said that the translation of the Qur'ān made into another language will also be the Qur'ān and its words will represent the words of Allah? It appears that later the Imām himself felt this weakness in the argument and, according to authentic traditions, gave up his earlier opinion, and adopted the opinion of Imāms Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad, who held that a person who could not recite Arabic words, could recite the translation of the Qur'ān in his prayer till he was able to pronounce Arabic words. However, the prayer of a person, who was able to recite the Qur'ān in Arabic, would not be valid if he recited its translation. The fact is that the two Imāms had proposed this concession only for those non-Arab converts who were not able to offer their prayer in Arabic immediately after embracing Islam. In this the basis of their argument was not this that the translation of the Qur'ān was the Qur'ān itself, but this that just as a person unable to perform *Rukū'* and *Sajdah* was allowed to offer his prayer by making signs, so a person unable to pronounce Arabic words could recite the translation. Then just as the prayer of a person who offered it by making signs could not be valid as soon as the cause of inability was removed, so the prayer of a person who recited the translation would not be valid as soon as he became able to pronounce Arabic words. (For a detailed discussion, see *Al-Mabsūt* by Sarkhisī, Vol. I, p. 37; *Fath-ul-Qadir* and *Sharḥ 'Ināya 'alal-Hedāya*, Vol. I pp. 190-201).

123. That is, "The learned men of the Israelites know that the teachings of the Qur'ān are the same as of the former Scriptures. Though the people of Makkah themselves are un-initiated in the knowledge of the Book, there are many scholars among the Israelites living in the surrounding areas, who fully understand that the Qur'ān did not bring a novel "message", which was being presented by Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah for the first time, but it was the same message which had been brought and preached by Prophets of Allah one after the other since thousands of years. Is it not then a convincing proof of the fact that the Qur'ān has been sent down by the same

Lord of the universe, Who sent down the former Books?"

According to Ibn Hishām's Life of the Holy Prophet, a little before the revelation of these verses a deputation of 20 men, who had been influenced by the preaching of Ḥadrat Ja'far, came to Makkah from Ḥabash. They met the Holy Prophet in Masjid al-Ḥarām and asked him in the presence of the unbelieving Quraish what his teachings were. In response, the Holy Prophet recited a few verses of the Qur'ān, whereupon tears came down from their eyes and they believed in him there and then to be a true Messenger of Allah. Then when they took leave of the Holy Prophet, Abū Jahl met them along with a few other men of the Quraish and rebuked them, saying, "Never has a more stupid company come here before: O foolish men, you were sent here by your people with a view to inquiring about this man, but no sooner did you meet him than you gave up your own faith!" Those gentle people did not like to have a dispute with Abū Jahl, so they left him, saying, "We have no wish to enter an argument with you: you are responsible for your faith and we are for ours: we adopted something in which we saw some good for ourselves." (Vol. II, p. 32). This same incident has been mentioned in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ, thus: "Those to whom We had given the Book before this, believe in the Qur'ān and when it is recited to them, they say, 'We have believed in it: this is the very Truth from our Lord: we were even before this followers of Islam'. And when they heard vain and meaningless talk, they refrained from entering an argument, saying, 'For us are our deeds and for you yours: peace be to you: we do not like the ways of the ignorant!'" (vv. 52-55).

124. That is, "Now when a man from among themselves is reciting to them this Divine Revelation in lucid Arabic, they say that he himself has composed it, and therefore it cannot be from Allah. But if the same Revelation in eloquent Arabic had been sent down by Allah to a non-Arab as a miracle, and he had recited it before them in perfect Arabic accent, they would have invented some other excuse for not believing in him. They would have said that he is under the power and influence of a jinn, who speaks Arabic through a non-Arab." As a matter of fact, a lover of the truth considers the thing presented before him coolly and forms an opinion about it after due thought. But an obdurate person who is unwilling to believe, pays no attention to it at all, but instead seeks all sorts of excuses to reject it, and will, in any case, invent an excuse for his denial. This obduracy of the unbelieving Quraish has been exposed

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يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَيَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾
فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ
مِائِينَ سِنِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَعْوُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾
وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرِيْبَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ ذُكْرَىٰ تَوْ مَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا
تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيْطَانُ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ
لَمَعَزُولُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَ أَنْذِرْ
عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَ اخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾
فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنَّي بِرَبِّي ءِمْتًا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٧﴾
الَّذِي يَرْبِك حِينَ تَقُومُ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَ تَقْلِبَكَ فِي السُّجُودِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٩﴾
هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيْطَانُ ﴿٤٠﴾ تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٤١﴾
يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ كَذِبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَ الشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ
أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَ انْتَصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
ظَلَمُوا ۗ وَ سَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

they do not believe in it until they see the painful torment.¹²⁶ Then, when it overtakes them unawares, they say, "May we be given some respite?"¹²⁷ 201-203

Are these people clamouring for Our torment to be hastened? Have you considered this that even if We grant them the respite to enjoy life for years, and then there comes down on them that with which they are being threatened, the provisions of life that they have got, will not avail them anything?¹²⁸ 204-207

(Note it that) We have never destroyed a habitation unless it had its warners to administer admonition; and We have never been unjust.¹²⁹ 208-209

This (lucid Book) has not been brought down by satans,¹³⁰ nor does this work behove them,¹³¹ nor are they able to do it.¹³² They have indeed been kept out of its hearing.¹³³ 210-212

So, O Muḥammad, do not invoke any other deity besides Allah lest you should also be included among those who will be chastised.¹³⁴ Warn your nearest kinsfolk¹³⁵ and treat with kindness those of the believers who follow you, but if they disobey, tell them: "I am not responsible for what you do."¹³⁶ And put your trust in the Mighty and Merciful One,¹³⁷ Who watches you when you get up,¹³⁸ and when you move about among those who prostrate themselves in worship.¹³⁹ He is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing. 213-220

O people, shall I tell you upon whom the satans come down? They come down upon every sinning forgerer:¹⁴⁰ they whisper hearsay into ears, and most of them are liars.¹⁴¹ 221-223

As for the poets, they have the erring people to follow them.¹⁴² Do you not see that they stray aimlessly in every valley?¹⁴³ and say that which they do not practise themselves.¹⁴⁴—save those who believed and did good works and remembered Allah much, and when they were treated 224-227

unjustly, they only defended themselves (and did not show vindictiveness)¹⁴⁵.—And the iniquitous people will soon come to know what punishment awaits them.¹⁴⁶

Contd. from p. 267]

over and over again in the Qur'ān, and they have been clearly told that even if a miracle were shown to them, they would certainly have found an excuse to deny it because they are not inclined to believe: "O Messenger, even if We had sent down to you a Book written on paper, and even if they had touched it with their own hands, the disbelievers would have said, 'This is nothing but manifest sorcery'." (Al-An'ām: 7). "Even if We had opened a gate for them in heaven, and they had begun to ascend through it, they would have said, 'Our eyes have been dazzled; nay, we have been bewitched'." (Al-Hijr: 14-15).

125. That is, unlike the truth-loving people to whom the Qur'ān brings peace of the mind and heart, it passes like a hot iron rod through the hearts of the disbelievers, which sets them ill at ease, and they, instead of pondering over its themes, start looking for subterfuges to deny it.

126. The kind of torment with which the tribes and communities mentioned above were punished.

127. That is, "Until the criminals are actually overtaken by the torment, they do not believe in the Prophet. Then they feel remorse and desire to be given some respite when it is too late."

128. There is a subtle gap between this and the preceding sentence, which the reader himself can fill with a little thinking. They were asking for the torment to be hastened because they were not sure that it would ever come. They were confident that they would continue living a life of ease and indulgence as they had been living till then. On account of the same confidence they challenged the Holy Prophet, as if to say, "If you are a Messenger of Allah, and we deserve to be chastised by Allah because we have treated you as a liar, then you should hasten that torment on us, with which you threaten us." At this it is being said, "Well, even if they be right in their confidence, and the torment is not sent upon them immediately, and they are allowed a long respite to enjoy life as they expect, the question is: What will these few years of worldly pleasure and comfort avail them when the inevitable scourge from Allah overtakes them suddenly as it overtook the 'Ād and the Thamūd, or the people of Lot and of Aiykah, or if they are visited by death which nobody can escape?"

129. That is, "We could not be blamed for any injustice when

they did not heed the warning and admonition of the warners and were destroyed. It would have been injustice if no effort had been made to admonish them and guide them aright prior to their destruction."

130. After the positive aspect as stated in vv. 192-193, the negative aspect is being stated that the Qur'ān has not been brought down by satans as the enemies of the Truth allege. The unbelieving Quraish in their campaign to spread lies and slander against the Holy Prophet were facing a real difficulty. They did not know how to account for the wonderful discourses which were being presented before the people in the form of the Qur'ān and which were moving their hearts deeply. They could not stop the Qur'ān from reaching the people. The only thing they could do to counteract its effect and influence was to create doubts and suspicions about it in their minds and hearts. Therefore, in their desperation they charged that Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was a sorcerer, who was being inspired by the satans, and they considered this charge of theirs to be the most effective because it could neither be easily verified nor refuted.

131. That is, these revelations and themes do not at all suit the satans. Any person who has a little common sense can well understand that the sublime discourses being presented in the Qur'ān cannot be inspired by the satans. Never has it happened that the satans might have taught the people through the sorcerers to worship God and fear Him, or forbidden them from *shirk* and idol-worship, or warned them of the accountability of the Hereafter, or prohibited them from tyranny and sexual and moral evils, and exhorted them instead to act righteously and do good to others. Such works cannot behove the satans. Their only pastime can be to sow the seeds of discord among the people and to arouse them to mischief and vice. The common observation is that people visit the sorcerers to find out whether they will succeed in their love affairs or not, what move would suit them in gambling, what trick and stratagem would be helpful against the enemy, or who had stolen the camel of so and so. Apart from such affairs and problems, the sorcerers and their patron-saints cannot be expected to worry themselves about matters like reforming the people, teaching them morals and cleansing their lives of vice and evil.

132. That is, even if the satans wanted they could not impart Truth and Goodness to the people like a true teacher and reformer as the Qur'ān does. Even if to deceive the people, they came out under the guise of a benefactor, their work would not be free from blemishes, which would betray their ignorance and their hidden satanic nature. Similarly the life and the teachings of a person who poses to be a religious guide, under the influence and inspiration of satans, would inevitably

reflect the wickedness of intention and design. Thus the satans can neither inspire others with piety and goodness, nor can those, who have any relation with the satans, become pious and righteous themselves. Then in addition to its high and noble teachings, the Qur'ān is a lucid and eloquent Book, which contains the knowledge of Reality. That is why it has over and over again put forward the challenge that human beings and jinns would never be able to produce a book like the Qur'ān even if they collaborated with all their energies and capacities. "Declare this : Even if human beings and jinns should cooperate with one another to bring forth a book like the Qur'ān, they will never be able to bring anything like it, even though all of them help one another." (Bani Isra'il : 88).

"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." (Yūnus : 38).

133. That is, "Not to speak of interfering with the revelation of the Qur'ān, the satans are not even given a chance to hear the Qur'ān any moment from the time Angel Gabriel receives it from Allah till he reveals it to the heart of the Holy Prophet. They are so kept out of its hearing that they cannot get any hint as to its words and contents so as to tell their friends that the Holy Prophet was going to give such and such a message to his followers, or that his address would contain such and such a thing that day. For further details. see E. N.'s 8 to 12 of Al-Hijr, E.N.'s 5 to 7 of Aṣ Ṣāffāt, and Sūrah Jinn : 8-9-27.

134. This does not mean that the Holy Prophet was going to be involved in *shirk* from which he was to be admonished to desist. The object was to warn the disbelievers and polytheists to the effect : "As the message of the Qur'ān is based on pure Truth revealed by the Almighty Ruler of the universe, and there is no tinge of any satanic impurity in it, there could be no question of showing a favour to somebody in regard to the Truth. Even if the Holy Messenger himself, who is nearest to Allah and His most beloved servant, deviated a little from the path of His obedience and invoked any other deity than Allah, he could not escape the punishment." When it was so in the case of the Holy Prophet, who else could have the hope that after committing *shirk* with regard to Allah, he would be able to escape the punishment or help others to escape it.

135. Just as there could be no concession or favour for the person of the Prophet in a matter concerning Allah's religion, so there could be no question of a favour being shown to the Prophet's family or his nearest kinsfolk. Here the case of everybody will be judged on merit, and nobody will be shown any favour on account of his ancestry or

relation with somebody else. The accountability of the Hereafter and punishment for deviation and misdeeds are the same for everybody and even the Prophet's nearest kinsfolk are no exception. Therefore, the Holy Prophet was commanded to warn his relatives and kindred to attain the right belief and to act righteously because they would not escape punishment only by virtue of being his relations.

There are authentic Traditions to show that after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet first of all addressed the sons and daughters of his grandfather. Calling each one of them by name, he said: "O children of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, O 'Abbās, O Ṣafīah, paternal aunt of Allah's Messenger, O Fāṭimah, daughter of Muḥammad! You are warned to beware and save yourselves from the torment of the Hell-Fire: I cannot protect you from Allah's punishment; you may, however, demand whatever you like from my worldly property." Then as was the custom in Arabia, to warn the people of an impending calamity, he stood on top of Mount Ṣafā one morning and called out: "O people of Quraish, O children of Ka'b bin Luayy, O children of Murrah, O children of Qaṣayy, O children of 'Abd Manāf, O children of 'Abd Shams, O children of Hāshim, O children of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib....", and in this way he called out each branch and clan of the Quraish by name. When all the people had got together, he said, "O People, if I tell you that on the other side of this hill, there is a huge army ready to attack you, will you believe my word?" With one voice they replied in the affirmative, saying that they had never heard a lie from him in the past. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said, "Well, I warn you of the impending scourge of Allah: save yourselves from His punishment: I cannot be of any help to you against Him. On the Day of Resurrection, the righteous only will be nearest to me. Let it not happen that others should come forth with good deeds and you should appear with the burden of sins on your heads. Then you will call me for help, but I shall be constrained to turn my face away from you. Of course, here in this world, I am bound to you by blood relations, and I shall treat you with all possible politeness as a good relation should." (Several Traditions on this subject have been reported in Bukhārī, Muslim, Musnad Aḥmad, Tirmizī, Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah, Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, Ḥaḍrat Zubair bin 'Amr and Ḥaḍrat Qabisah bin Makhāriq).

The matter was not simply this that on receipt of the Command to "warn your nearest kinsfolk", the Holy Prophet called together all his relatives and complied with it. In fact, the principle it meant to stress was that in the matter of religion the Prophet and his relations enjoyed no special privilege of which the other people might be deprived. What

was harmful for one man, was harmful for everybody. The Prophet was supposed to first protect himself from this and then warn his nearest kinsfolk and the common people of its fatal consequences. On the other hand, what was good and beneficial for one man, was good and beneficial for all. As such, the Prophet should first adopt it himself and then exhort his relatives also to adopt it, so that everybody may see that the Prophet does not only preach his message to others but practises it himself also sincerely. The Holy Prophet followed this principle throughout his life. On the conquest of Makkah, when he entered the city, he declared: "Every kind of interest payable from the people during the age of ignorance, is trampled under my feet, and first of all, I remit the interest payable to my uncle 'Abbās." (It should be noted that before the prohibition of interest, Ḥaḍrat 'Abbās traded money on interest, and a substantial amount of interest payable to him at that time was outstanding against the people). Once the Holy Prophet ordered cutting off of the hand of a Quraishite woman, named Fāṭimah, on the charge of theft. Ḥaḍrat Usāmah bin Zaid came to intercede for her, whereupon the Holy Prophet said: "By God, even if Fāṭimah, daughter of Muḥammad, had committed the theft, I would have ordered amputation of her hand, too."

136. This can have two meanings: (1) "Treat those of your relatives with kindness, who have believed in you and followed your teachings practically; as for those who have not accepted your message, you may declare that you are not responsible for what they do." (2) "You should treat with kindness every such person, who believes in and obeys you, and you should warn every unbeliever that you take no responsibility for his actions."

This verse shows that at that time there were some people among the Quraish and the neighbouring Arabs, who had believed in the truth of the Holy Prophet's message; but they had not as yet started obeying his teachings practically. They were still, as usual, living the same life of unbelief among their people as were the other unbelievers. Allah set apart such believers from those true Believers who after belief had adopted total obedience of the Holy Prophet. The Command "to treat with kindness" was meant only for the latter group. As for those who had turned away from his obedience, and who included both those who believed in the truth of his message and those who rejected it, the Holy Prophet was instructed to disown them, and tell them plainly that they themselves were responsible for their deeds, and that after giving them the warning he was not at all responsible for what they did.

137. That is, "You should not care at all for any worldly power, howsoever big and strong, but should continue to perform your mission with complete trust in that Being Who is Mighty as well as Merciful. He is Mighty and, therefore, anybody enjoying His support, cannot be overcome by any other power; He is Merciful and, therefore, He will not let go waste the sacrifices and efforts of the one who struggles for the sake of raising His Word in the world."

138, "Getting up" may mean getting up for the Prayers during the night, or coming out for the purpose of performing the Prophetic Mission.

139. This can have several meanings: (1) Allah watches you when in the congregational Prayers you stand and sit and perform *Rukū'* and *Sajdah* with your followers behind you. (2) He watches you when you get up in the night to see what your Companions (whose mark of distinction is that "they prostrate themselves in worship") are doing for their own well-being in the Hereafter. (3) He is fully aware of how you and your Companions are endeavouring to reform the people. (4) He is fully aware of all your efforts to revolutionise the lives of the people who "prostrate themselves in worship"; He knows what sort of training you are giving them to reform them; how you have purified their lives and transformed them into the best people.

These characteristics of the Holy Prophet and his Companions have a special significance in the context here. In the first place, the Holy Prophet deserves Allah's Mercy and His Support for Allah, being All-Hearing and All-Knowing, is fully aware of the struggle he is waging for His cause and of the efforts he is making to reform his Companions. Secondly, when a person is living such a noble life as Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is actually living, and the characteristics of his followers are those which Muḥammad's Companions have, only an idiot can have the boldness to say that he is inspired by the satans, or that he is a poet. People are fully aware of the lives of the sorcerers who are inspired by the satans and also of the poets and their admirers living among them. Can anybody honestly say that there is no difference whatever between the noble life being led by Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his Companions and the sort of life being led by the poets and the sorcerers? Then, what is it if not sheer impudence that the former are openly being branded as poets and sorcerers without any shame?

140. This implies the sorcerers, astrologers, fortune-tellers and conjurers who pose as knowers of the unseen and tell the people their future, or as wise men who have control over jinns and spirits and can make the destinies of the people through them.

141. This may have two meanings: (1) The satans somehow get a little hint of the truth and inspire their agents with it, mixing it with all kinds of falsehood; and (2) the deceitful, unscrupulous sorcerers hear something from the satans and then mixing it with falsehood, whisper it into the people's ears. This has been explained in a Tradition which Bukhārī has quoted on the authority of Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah. She says that when some people asked the Holy Prophet about sorcerers, he replied that they were nothing. They said, "O Messenger of Allah, they, sometimes, tell the right thing." The Holy Prophet answered, "That right thing is overheard by the jinns who whisper it into their friend's ear, who concocts a story by mixing a lot of falsehood in it."

142. That is, the people who follow and accompany the poets, are wholly different in their characteristics, habits and temper from those who follow and accompany Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace). The difference between the two groups is so obvious that one group can be easily distinguished from the other. On the one side, there are the people who are characterised by the high seriousness, civilized and gentle behaviour, righteousness and fear of God, sense of responsibility and a high regard for the rights of other; people who are fair and just in their dealings, who do not utter a word except in the cause of goodness, who have a high and pure ideal before them, which they pursue with single-minded devotion and for whose attainment they expend all their energies and capabilities. On other side, there are the people whose only pastime is to portray erotic scenes of love and wine-drinking, mocking and jesting, satirizing and eulogizing, or to arouse feelings of hatred and enmity and vengeance against others, or to describe charms of unchaste women of the brothel or of chaste ladies in the houses, only for the sake of pleasing the people and winning their applause. From the crowds who throng the poetic sessions and follow the "famous" poets, one cannot help forming the impression that those people are free from every moral restriction, who have no object in life except to gratify the lusts of the flesh like animals, and who have no idea whatever of the higher and nobler ideals and ends of life. The person who cannot see the obvious difference between the two types is indeed blind. But if in spite of seeing and knowing the difference, only for the purpose of suppressing the Truth, he says that Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his Companions are no different from the poets and their followers, he is not only a liar but has also transgressed all bounds of modesty and decency.

143. That is, they follow no fixed pattern for their thought and speech, but wander aimlessly in every valley. Every new impulse makes them take up a new theme regardless as to whether it has any truth in it or not. Under one momentary impulse they would start uttering wise

things; under another they would give expression to filthy and base feelings. If they felt pleased with somebody, they would exaggerate his praises, and if they felt offended by him, they would condemn him and run him down to hell. If they had a selfish motive, attached with somebody, they would feel no hesitation in giving preference to a miserly person over a generous person and to a cowardly person over a gallant person. On the contrary, if they felt displeased with somebody, they would not feel any shame in blotting his character and ridiculing him and his ancestors. That is why, one can find God-worship and atheism, materialism and spiritualism, morality and immorality, piety and filthiness, seriousness and jesting, eulogy and satire expressed side by side in the poetry of one and the same poet. A person who is aware of these well known characteristics of the poets cannot reconcile himself to charging the recipient of the Qur'ān with poetry, whose every discourse and word is clear and precise, whose objective is clearly defined, and who has never in his life uttered a word deviating in any way from the path of truth, righteousness and virtue.

At another place in the Qur'ān, it has been stated that poetry is not suited to the temperament of the Holy Prophet : "We have not taught him poetry, nor does it suit him." (Yā Sīn : 69). And this fact was fully known to the people who had any personal acquaintance with the Holy Prophet. Authentic Traditions show that he could not recite a complete verse from memory. If ever during conversation he remembered of a good verse of some poet, he would recite it without much care and regard for its metre and order of words.

Once Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah was asked whether the Holy Prophet ever made use of poetic verses in his discourses. She replied that he hated poetic verses the most, though sometimes he would recite a verse of a poet of Banī Quais, but in so doing he would unconsciously change the order of its words. When Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr corrected him, he would say, "Brother, I am not a poet, nor composing poetry is my object." Arabic poetry abounded in themes of sex and love romances, wine-drinking, tribal hatreds and feuds, ancestral pride and vanity and made little or no mention of pure and noble themes. It was so saturated with falsehood, exaggeration, false accusations, undue praises, vanity, satiric invectives, jesting and polytheistic obscenities that the Holy Prophet once remarked : "It is better that the interior of one of you be filled with pus than with poetic verses." However, if there was something good in a verse, he would appreciate it, and say, "Some verses are based on wisdom." When he heard the verses of Umayyah bin Abi Ṣalt, he said, "His verse is a believer but his heart a disbeliever." Once a Companion recited a hundred or so good verses before him, and

he went on urging him to recite more.

144. This characteristic of the poets was just the antithesis of the Holy Prophet's conduct and practice. Everybody knew that the Holy Prophet said what he practised and practised what he said. The fact that there was complete conformity between his word and deed, could not be denied by anybody. On the contrary, everyone was well aware that the poets said one thing and practised just the opposite of it. For instance, they would express noble themes of generosity, indifference to worldly wealth, contentment and self-respect in their poetry, but, in practical life, they would turn out to be extremely stingy and cowardly, avaricious and selfish. They would find fault with others on trifles, but would themselves be involved in grave moral weaknesses.

145. Here those poets have made an exception from the general reproach, who possess the following four characteristics :

(1) They should be believers in Allah, His Prophets, His Books and the Hereafter.

(2) They should be pious in practical life and not sinners, nor free from moral restrictions to say whatever they like.

(3) They should be remembering Allah much in their day to day lives as well as in their literary work. It should not be so that their personal lives reflect God-consciousness and piety, but their poetry is replete with themes of debauchery and lusts of the flesh, or that their poetry is full of serious themes of wisdom and God-consciousness, but their personal lives devoid of any trace of the remembrance of Allah. As a matter of fact, both these states are equally despicable. A good poet is he who is God-conscious in his personal life and whose poetic talent and skills also are devoted to the advancement of the way of life followed by the God-conscious, God-fearing and God-worshipping people.

(4) They should not satirize others for personal reasons, nor take vengeance on others on account of personal, racial and national prejudices, but when they are required to support the truth, they should use their literary powers like weapons of war against the unjust and treacherous people. It does not behove the believers to adopt a humble, supplicating attitude against injustice and oppression. Traditions show that when the unbelieving and *mushrik* poets raised a storm of false accusations against Islam and the Holy Prophet and spread the poison of hatred against the Muslims, the Holy Prophet urged and encouraged the poets of Islam to counter attack them. Once he said to Ka'b bin Mālik, "Satirize them, for, I swear by God in Whose hand is my soul, your verse will be more effective and damaging for them than the arrow." Likewise he said to Ḥassān bin Thābit, "Deal with them and Gabriel is with you." And, "Say and the Holy Spirit is with

you." Once he said, "The believer fights with the sword as well as with the tongue."

146. "The iniquitous people": The people who out of sheer obduracy calumniated the Holy Prophet of being a sorcerer, poet and a mad and enchanted man, in order to defeat Islam, and to confuse the other people and distract them from his message and invitation.

THE MEANING OF THE QUR'ĀN

Vol. IX

Sūrah An-Naml—Sūrah Ar-Rūm

(ARABIC TEXT WITH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY)

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