

THE MEANING OF THE QUR'ĀN

Vol. IX

Sūrah An-Naml—Sūrah Ar-Rūm

(ARABIC TEXT WITH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY)

By

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'Abdul 'Aziz Kamāl

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XXVII

AN-NAML النَّمْل

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XXVII

AN-NAML النمل

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from the phrase *wād-in-naml* which occurs in verse 18, implying that it is a Sūrah in which the story of An-Naml (the Ant) has been related.

Period of Revelation

The subject-matter and the style bear full resemblance with the Sūrahs of the middle Makkan period and this is supported by traditions as well. According to Ibn ‘Abbās and Jābir bin Zaid, “First the Sūrah Ash-Shu‘arāā’ was sent down, then the Sūrah An-Naml and then Al-Qaṣaṣ.”

Theme and Topics

The Sūrah consists of two discourses, the first from the beginning of the Sūrah to the end of verse 58, and the second from verse 59 to the end of the Sūrah.

The theme of the first discourse is that only those people can benefit from the guidance of the Qur’ān and become worthy of the good promises made in it, who accept the realities which this Book presents as the basic realities of the universe, and then follow up their belief with obedience and submission in their practical lives as well. But the greatest hindrance for man to follow this way is the

denial of the Hereafter. For it makes him irresponsible, selfish and given to worldly life, which in turn makes it impossible for him to submit himself before God and to accept the moral restrictions on his lusts and desires. After this introduction three types of character have been presented.

The first type is characterised by Pharaoh and the chiefs of Thamūd and the rebels of the people of Lot, who were all heedless of the accountability of the Hereafter and had consequently become the slaves of the world. These people did not believe even after seeing the miracles. Rather they turned against those who invited them to goodness and piety. They persisted in their evil ways which are held in abhorrence by every sensible person. They did not heed the admonition even until a moment before they were overtaken by the scourge of Allah.

The second type of character is of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), who had been blessed by God with wealth and kingdom and grandeur to an extent undreamt of by the chiefs of the disbelievers of Makkah. But, since he regarded himself as answerable before God and had the feeling that whatever he had was only due to Allah's bounty, he had adopted the attitude of obeisance before Him and there was no tinge of vanity in his character.

The third type is of the queen of Sheba, who ruled over a most wealthy and well-known people in the history of Arabia. She possessed all those means of life, which could cause a person to become vain and conceited. Her wealth and possessions far exceeded the wealth and possessions of the Quraish. Then she professed *shirk*, which was not only an ancestral way of life with her, but she had to follow it in order to maintain her position as a ruler. Therefore, it was much more difficult for her to give up *shirk* and adopt the way of *Tauhīd* than it could be for a common *mushrik*. But when the Truth became evident to her, nothing could stop her from accepting it. Her devia-

tion was, in fact, due to her being born and brought up in a polytheistic environment and not because of her being a slave to her lusts and desires. Her conscience was not devoid of the sense of accountability before God.

In the second discourse, at the outset, attention has been drawn to some of the most glaring and visible realities of the universe, and the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked one question after the other to the effect : "Do these realities testify to the creed of *shirk* which you are following, or to the truth of *Tauhīd* to which the Qur'ān invites you?" After this the real malady of the disbelievers has been pointed out, saying, "The thing which has blinded them and made them insensitive to every glaring reality is their denial of the Hereafter. This same thing has rendered every matter and affair of life non-serious for them. For, when according to them, everything has to become dust ultimately, and the whole struggle of life is purposeless and without an object before it, the truth and falsehood are equal and alike. Therefore, the question whether one's system of life is based on the right or wrong foundations, becomes meaningless for him."

But the discourse, as outlined above, is not meant to dissuade the Prophet and the Muslims from calling the obdurate and heedless people to the way of *Tauhīd*; it is, in fact, intended to arouse them from their slumber. That is why in vv. 67-93 certain things have been said repeatedly in order to produce in the people a sense of the Hereafter, to warn them of the consequences of being heedless of it, and to convince them of its coming, like an eye witness of something, who convinces the other person of it, who has not seen it.

In conclusion, the real invitation of the Qur'ān, that is, the invitation to serve One Allah alone, has been presented in a concise but forceful manner, and the people warned that accepting it would be to their own advantage and rejecting it to their own disadvantage. For if they deferred

their faith until they saw those Signs of God after the appearance of which they would be left with no choice but to believe and submit, they should bear in mind the fact that that would be the time of judgement and believing then would be of no avail.



طَسَّ تَفَّتْكَ أَيُّ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ۝ هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝
 الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ۝
 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ۝

XXVII

النَّمْلُ AN-NAML

Verses: 93

Revealed at Makkah

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

Tā. Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and the lucid Book,¹ a guidance and good news² for those believers who establish the *Ṣalāt* and pay the *Zakāt*;³ and they are the ones who fully believe in the Hereafter.⁴ The fact is that, We have made the misdeeds of those who deny the Hereafter seem fair to them; therefore, they stray about blindly.⁵

1-4

1. *Kitāb-i-mubīn* has three meanings: (1) This book presents its teachings and instructions and injunctions plainly; (2) it distinguishes between the Truth and falsehood clearly; and (3) its being a Divine Book is obvious: whoever studies it with open eyes will realize that it has not been composed and forged by the Holy Prophet himself.

2. That is, the verses themselves are a "guidance" and "good news", because they give guidance and convey good news in a most excellent manner.

3. That is, "These verses of the Qur'ān give guidance and convey the good news of a good end only to those people who possess these two qualities: (1) They should affirm faith, that is, accept the invitation of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), believe in One God as their only Deity and Lord, accept the Qur'ān as the Book of Allah, acknowledge the

[Contd. on p. 10

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْآخِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَ
 إِنَّكَ لَتَلَقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾ إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي
 آنَسْتُ نَارًا سَآتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آيَاتٍ كُفْرًا بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾
 فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ
 رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يُوسَى إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾ وَالْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا
 رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي
 لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ
 فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخَرِّجْ بَيْضًا مِنْ غَيْرِ
 سُوءٍ إِنِّي تُسِعُ آيَاتِي إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَلَمَّا
 جَاءَهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا
 أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَ لَقَدْ آتَيْنَا
 دَاوُدَ وَ سُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ عِبَادِهِ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عِلْمُنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ
 وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِن هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْبَيِّنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ
 جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ حَتَّى إِذَا آتَوَا عَلَى
 وَادِ التَّمِيمِ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسْكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطَبْتُمْ
 سُلَيْمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُ لَوْ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِمَّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ
 رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ
 أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ

They are the ones for whom there is an evil chastisement,⁶ and in the Hereafter they shall be the worst losers. And (O Muhammad), you are most surely receiving this Qur'ān from the One, Who is All-Wise, All-Knowing.⁷ 5-6

(Tell them the story of the time) when Moses said to the people of his house,⁸ "I have seen a fire: I may either bring some information from there or a burning brand so that you may warm yourselves."⁹ When he came to it, a voice called out:¹⁰ "Blessed is He Who is in the fire and the one who is around it. Glorified is Allah, Lord of the worlds.¹¹ O Moses, this is I, Allah, the Almighty, the All-Wise: Just cast down your staff." No sooner did Moses see the staff writhing like a snake¹² than he turned about and fled, without even looking behind. "O Moses, fear not: the Messengers never feel afraid in My Presence,¹³ unless, of course, someone has committed an offence.¹⁴ Then, if after the evil, he changed (his act) into a good one, I am indeed All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.¹⁵ And just put your hand into your bosom: it will come out shining, without any hurt. These (two Signs) are from among the nine Signs (you will take)¹⁶ to Pharaoh and his people: they are indeed a very wicked people." 7-12

But when Our clear Signs came before those people, they said, "This is plain magic." They rejected those Signs out of sheer injustice and vanity, whereas in their heart of hearts they were convinced.¹⁷ See, then, what fate those mischief-makers met. 13-14

(On the other hand,) We gave knowledge to David and Solomon,¹⁸ and they said, "Praise is for Allah Who exalted us above many of His believing servants."¹⁹ And Solomon succeeded David,²⁰ and he said, "O people, we have been taught the speech of the birds,²¹ and we have been granted all sorts of things.²² This is indeed a great favour (of Allah)." For Solomon were gathered hosts of jinn and men and birds,²³ which were kept under strict discipline. (Once he was marching in an expedition with 15-19

them) until when they came to the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, get into your holes lest Solomon and his hosts should trample you down without even knowing it."²⁴ Hearing its words, Solomon laughed smilingly and said— "O My Lord, restrain²⁵ me so that I may render thanks to Thee for Thy favours which Thou hast bestowed upon me and my parents, and (enable me) to do such good works as may please Thee; and admit me, by Thy mercy, among Thy righteous servants."²⁶

Contd. from p. 7]

Holy Prophet as a true Prophet and their Leader, and also adopt the belief that after this life there is another life, in which man has to render his full account of deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly. (2) They should not only profess faith verbally, but should also be inclined to follow and obey the Divine Commands practically, and the first indication of this inclination is that they should establish the *Ṣalāt* and pay the *Zakāt*. The verses of the Qur'ān will show the right way of life only to those people who fulfil these two conditions; they will explain to them the difference between the right and the wrong at every stage on the way, protect them against the wrong ways at every turn of the way, and bless them with the satisfaction that whatever be the consequences of following the Right Way in the world, in the Hereafter they will certainly attain the eternal and everlasting success and the goodwill of Allah only through it. For in order to derive full benefit from the teaching of a teacher, one has first to have faith in him, then accept to be his student, and then work according to his instructions. Similarly, a patient who wants to be benefited by a doctor has first to accept him as a physician, and then follow his instructions with regard to medical dosage, prevention, etc. Then only he can assure the patient of the desired results.

Some people have interpreted the words *yu'tūn-az-zakāt* in this verse to mean that they should adopt moral purity. But, wherever in the Qur'ān the word *itā-i-zakāt* has occurred along with the word *iqāmat-i-ṣalāt*, it means payment of the *Zakāt*, which is the second pillar of Islam after the *Ṣalāt*. Moreover, the Qur'ān has used the word *tazakkā* for adopting piety and purity and not *itā'* which is specifically used for the payment of the *Zakāt*. In fact, what is meant to be impressed here is this: In order to benefit fully by the guidance of the Qur'ān, it is imperative that one should adopt the attitude of submission and obedience in practical life as well after the

affirmation of the Faith, and the establishment of the *Ṣalāt* and the payment of the *Zakāt* is the first indication that one has actually adopted such an attitude. If there is no such indication, it will become obvious that one is rebellious: he might have acknowledged a ruler as such, but he is not inclined to carry out his commands.

4. Although belief in the Hereafter is an article of the Faith, and a believer will also believe in it along with believing in *Tauhīd* and the Prophethood, here it has been specially mentioned separately in order to bring out its unique importance. The object is to impress that for those people who do not believe in the Hereafter, it is impossible to follow, even tread, the way taught by the Qur'ān. For the people of this way of thinking naturally determine their criterion of good and evil by the results that appear, in this world. For them it is not possible to accept any admonition or guidance which seeks to determine the good and evil by the criterion of the gain and loss in the Hereafter. Such people in the first instance do not at all heed the teachings of the Prophets, but if for some reason, they also get included among the believers, they find it difficult to take even the initial steps on the way of the Faith and Islam because of the lack of faith in the Hereafter. For as soon as they will encounter the first situation where the demands of the worldly gains and the losses of the Hereafter will pull them in opposite directions, they will freely allow themselves to be pulled towards the worldly gains without caring in the least for the losses of the Hereafter, even though they may be making all sorts of claims to be the believers.

5. That is, "This is God's Law of Nature and the natural logic of human psychology that when man thinks that the results of his life's struggle are confined to this world only, when he does not believe in the existence of any court where his life's work has to be scrutinized and judged finally for good and evil, and when he does not believe in any life hereafter when he will be requited strictly in accordance with the real worth of his life's deeds, he will inevitably develop in himself a material outlook on life, and every kind of conflict between the Truth and falsehood, good and evil, morality and immorality, will appear utterly meaningless to him. Then, whatever earns him pleasure and enjoyment, material progress and prosperity, power and authority, will be the good for him, no matter it be any philosophy of life, any way of life and any system of morality. He will have no concern for truth and reality. His real ambition will be to win successes and earn adornments only of this worldly life, and their pursuit will lead him astray into every valley. Then, whatever he does with this object in view,

will be a thing of beauty for him, and he will regard all those others as foolish, who are not absorbed like him in seeking the world, and doing anything and everything without any moral qualm and inhibition.

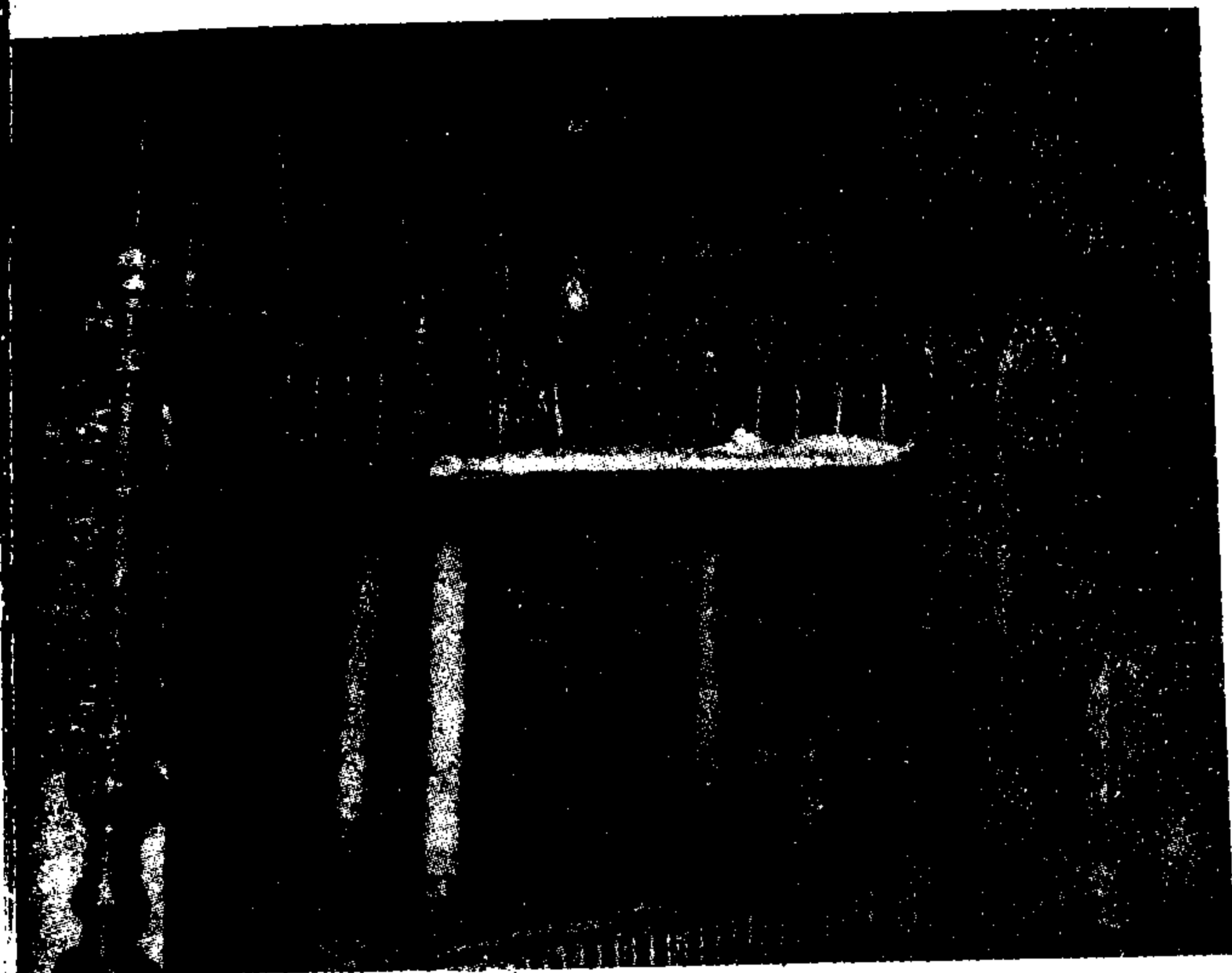
6. Nothing definite has been said about the form, time and place of this "evil chastisement." For it is imposed in this world also on different persons and groups and nations in countless different ways; a part of it is also experienced by the wicked when they are about to leave the world; man experiences it also in the intermediary state between death and Resurrection; and then after Resurrection it will become endless and everlasting.

7. That is, the things being mentioned in the Qur'ān are not imaginary nor are they based on the presumptions and opinions of a man, but they are being revealed by the One Who is All-Wise and All-Knowing, Who is perfect in Wisdom and Knowledge, Who has full knowledge of the affairs of His creation and of its past and present and future, and Whose Wisdom devises the best schemes for the reform and guidance of His servants.

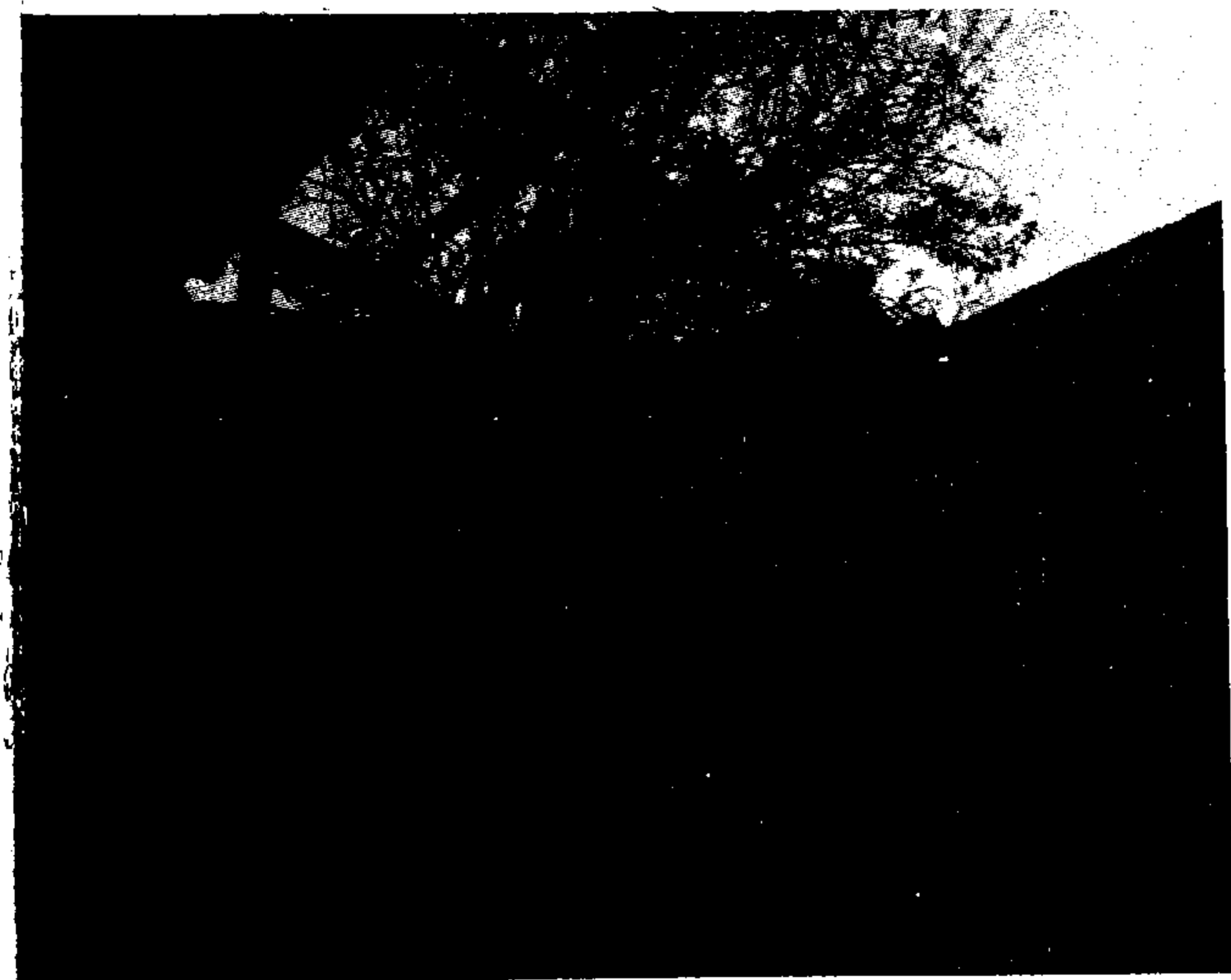
8. This happened at the foot of Mount Ṭūr when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was travelling along with his family in search of a suitable place for settlement, after passing eight to ten years in Madyan (Midian). From Madyan, whose territory lay on both sides of the Gulf of 'Aqabah, on the sea-shores of Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula, he reached the place called Mt. Sinai and Jabal Mūsā in the southern part of the Peninsula, which at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān was well known as Ṭūr. (See also *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VIII Ash-Shu'arāā', E.N. 115). The details of this story have already been given in Sūra Ṭā Hā: 9-24 above and will follow in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ: 29-36 below.

9. The context shows that it was a cold wintry night and the Prophet Moses was passing through unfamiliar land. Therefore, he said to his family, "Let me go and find out what habitation it is where a fire is alight, and get some information about the travelling routes and the nearby habitations. I shall at least bring a few embers for you to light a fire and warm yourselves."

The place where the Prophet Moses had seen a burning bush is situated at about 5,000 ft. above sea level at the foot of Mt. Ṭūr. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of the Roman Empire, had a church built in about 365 A.D. right at the spot where this event had occurred. Two hundred years later Emperor Justinian had a monastery built which included the church built by Constantine as well. Both the monastery and the church stand even today and are under the control of the monks of the Greek Orthodox Church. Some photo-



The spot in St. Catherine's Monastery where the Prophet Moses had seen the burning bush.



The tree from which the Prophet Moses heard God speak to him.



St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Tur

graphs of it are given on the opposite page

10. According to Al-Qaṣas: 30, the voice was calling out from a tree. What one understands from this is this: A sort of a fire was alight on the ground on the edge of the valley, but neither was anything burning nor any smoke arising. In the midst of the fire there stood a lush green tree from which a voice started calling out this all of a sudden.

This is a strange thing which the Prophets of Allah have been experiencing. When the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) was first blessed with Prophethood, an Angel appeared before him in the solitude of the Cave of Ḥirā' and started delivering Allah's message. A similar thing happened with the Prophet Moses also. A journeying person has halted at a place, sees a fire at a distance, approaches it in order to get some information about the route, or to pick a burning ember, and suddenly Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Infinite, the Inconceivable Being, starts speaking to him. On such occasions, there exists externally as well as within the Prophets' own selves an extraordinary state which fills them with the assurance that it is not a jinn or a satan or an illusion of their own mind, nor are their senses being deceived, but it is the Lord of the universe, or His Angel, who is speaking to them. (For further explanation, see E.N. 10 of An-Najm).

11. Here the use of the words *Subḥān-Allah* (glorified is Allah) is meant to warn the Prophet Moses to this effect: "You should never think that Allah, Lord of the universe, is sitting in the tree, or has entered into it, or that His absolute Light has concentrated itself into the limited sphere of your sight, or some tongue is functioning in some mouth to produce speech, but it is Allah, Who is Pure and Free from all such limitations, Who is Himself speaking to you."

12. In Sūrahs Al-A'rāf and Ash-Shu'arāā', the snake has been called *thu'bān* (a large serpent) but here *jāānn*, a small snake. The reason is that in physical size it was a serpent but in movement it was swift like a small snake. The same thing has been expressed by *ḥayyatun tas'ā* (a running snake) in Ṭā Hā: 20.

13. That is, "In My Presence there is no danger of any harm to the Messenger. When I call someone into My Presence to appoint him to the high office of Prophethood, I Myself become responsible for his safety. Therefore, the Messenger should remain fearless and confident in every kind of unusual situation: it will never harm or hurt him in any way."

14. This exception can be contiguous as well as remote. In the first case it will imply that there can be a genuine cause of fear if the

Messenger has committed an offence; in the second case it will mean: "None should have any cause of fear in My Presence, unless, of course, someone has committed an offence."

15. That is, "If even an offender repents and reforms himself and does good instead of evil, I will pardon him." This implied both a warning and a good news. The Prophet Moses had killed a Copt inadvertently and fled from Egypt. This was an offence to which a subtle reference was made. Then, when this offence was committed un-intentionally by the Prophet Moses, he had immediately offered repentance to Allah, saying, "O my Lord! I have sinned against myself, so forgive me." So, "Allah forgave him" there and then. (Al-Qasas: 16). Here the good news of the same forgiveness has been given him, as if to say, "O Moses, there could be a genuine cause for you to feel afraid in My Presence, because you had committed an offence, but when you have changed the evil into good, I have nothing but forgiveness and mercy for you. I have not called you here at this time to punish you, but I am going to send you on a great mission with wonderful miracles."

16. According to Sūrah Banī Isrā'il; 101, the Prophet Moses had been granted nine clearly visible Signs, which according to the details given in Al-A'rāf were the following: (1) The staff's turning into a serpent, (2) the shining hand when it was drawn out of the armpit, (3) public triumph over the magicians, (4) occurrence of a widespread famine in the land as foretold by the Prophet Moses, (5) the storm, (6) the locusts, (7) the incidence of weevils in the grain stores and of lice among human beings and animals, (8) the frogs, and (9) the rain of blood. (For explanation, see E.N. 43 of Az-Zukhruf).

17. As mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān, whenever a plague befell Egypt as foretold by the Prophet Moses, Pharaoh would say, "O Moses, pray to your Lord to remove this plague; then we shall submit to what you say." But as soon as the plague was removed, Pharaoh would break his promise. (Al-A'rāf: 134, Az-Zukhruf: 49-50). The Bible also has mentioned it (Exod., chs. 8 to 10), and otherwise also it could not be imagined that the occurrence of a famine throughout the country and the coming of a violent storm and the incidence of the locusts and the frogs and the weevils in such abundance could be due to any trick of magic. The miracles were so manifest that even a stupid person could not help realizing that the occurrence of the plagues on such a large scale and their removal at the Prophet's prayer could be only due to Allah, Lord of all Creation's

power and authority. That is why the Prophet Moses had told Pharaoh plainly: "You know it full well that none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent down these Signs." (Banī Isrā'il : 102). But the reason why Pharaoh and his chiefs rejected Moses knowingly was this: "What! should we believe in these two men who are human beings like ourselves and whose people are our bondsmen?" (Al-Mu'minūn: 47)

18. That is, the knowledge of the Reality, the knowledge that whatever they have is not theirs but the gift of Allah and whatever rights they have been granted over those things should be used strictly according to Allah's will, for they will be held answerable before Allah, the real Owner, for the right and wrong use of those rights. This knowledge is the opposite of the ignorance in which Pharaoh was involved. The type of character built on the ignorance has been presented in the preceding verses. Now, in the following verses, the model of the character built on the knowledge is being presented. The sort of kingdom, wealth, power and grandeur were common on both the sides. The Pharaoh had been given these as well as the Prophets David and Solomon. But the distinction of the ignorance and the knowledge built and moulded them into entirely different personalities.

19. That is, "There were other believing servants as well, who could be blessed with vicegerency. But it is only Allah's favour, not due to any special quality in ourselves, that He has chosen us to be rulers over this kingdom."

20. Succession here does not mean inheritance of wealth and properties, but the succession to the Prophet David in the Prophethood and vicegerency. For the wealth and possessions, if at all transferred, could not be transferred to the Prophet Solomon only, because Prophet David had other children also. Therefore, this verse cannot be cited to refute the *Hadīth* reported from the Holy Prophet, saying, "The inheritance left by us, the Prophets, is not divided as such: whatever we leave behind is charity." (*Bukhāri*) And: "There is no heir to a Prophet. Whatever he leaves behind, is divided among the needy and the indigent of the Muslims." (*Musnad Ahmad*: Traditions from Abū Bakr, *Ahādīth* No. 60 and 78).

The Prophet Solomon was the youngest son of the Prophet David. His Hebrew name Solomon is a synonym of *Salīm* (right-minded, affable). He succeeded the Prophet David in 965 B.C. and ruled his kingdom for forty years, till 926 B.C. For other details of his life and works, see E. N.'s 74-75 of *Al-Anbiyāā* in *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VII). Our commentators have greatly exaggerated the vastness of his kingdom, and have held that he ruled over a large part of the world. The fact, however, is that his kingdom comprised only the present Palestine and

Transjordan and a part of Syria. (See Map: Kingdom of the Prophets David and Solomon, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VI, p. 123).

21. There is no mention in the Bible that the Prophet Solomon had been taught the speech of the birds and animals, though the Israelite traditions contain a reference to it. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, p. 598).

22. That is, "Allah has bestowed on us all sorts of things." This, however, should not be understood literally; it only means the abundance of the wealth and the means of life granted by Allah. This was not said proudly by Prophet Solomon but only to express his gratitude to Allah for His grace and bounty and favours.

23. The Bible does not either make any mention that there were jinns also in the Prophet Solomon's armies, and he took service from them; but the Talmud and the rabbinical traditions contain details of this. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, p. 440). Some of the present-day writers have strained every nerve to prove that the words *jinn* and *ṭair* do not refer to the jinns and birds but to men who performed different duties in the Prophet Solomon's army. They say that the *jinn* imply the people of the mountain tribes whom Prophet Solomon had subdued and who performed feats of great strength and skill under him; and *ṭair* implies cavalry which could move much faster than the infantry. But these are indeed the worst examples of misinterpreting the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān here mentions three distinct kinds of the army consisting of the men, the jinns and the birds, and all the three have been qualified by the prefix *al* (*alif-lām*) to denote a class. Therefore, *al-jinn* and *al-ṭair* could not be included in *al-ins* (the men), but could be two separate and different classes from the men. Moreover, a person who has a little acquaintance with Arabic cannot imagine that in this language the mere word *al-jinn* could ever imply a group of the men, or *al-ṭair* troops mounted on horses, nor could any Arab understand these meanings from these words. Calling a man a jinn only figuratively because of some supernatural feat of his, or a woman a fairy because of her beauty, or a fast moving person a bird does not mean that the words jinn and fairy and bird will henceforth be taken to mean a powerful man and a beautiful woman and a fast moving person respectively. These are only the metaphoric and not the real meanings of these words. In a discourse, a word is used in its figurative instead of its real meaning, and the listeners also will take it in that meaning, only when there exists in the context a clear pointer to its being figurative. What, after all, is the pointer in the context here from which one may understand

that the words *jinn* and *lair* have been used not in their real and lexical meaning but in their figurative meaning? Contrary to this, the work and the state of a member each of the two groups that have been mentioned in the following verses, fall entirely against the purport of this interpretation. If a person does not want to believe in something stated in the Qur'ān, he should frankly say that he does not believe in it. But it would be moral cowardice and intellectual dishonesty if one should force the clear words of the Qur'ān to give the meaning that he wants them to give, and tell the world that he believes in what the Qur'ān says, whereas he does not, in fact, believe in it but believes in his own distorted meaning.

24. This verse also has been greatly misconstrued by some commentators of the present day. They say that *wād-in-naml* does not mean "valley of the ants", but it is the name of a valley that was in Syria, and *namlah* does not mean an ant but it is the name of a tribe. Thus, according to them, the verse means this: "When the Prophet Solomon reached the valley of the ants, a Namilite said, 'O people of the Naml tribe...'" But this also is an interpretation which is not supported by the words of the Qur'ān. Even if we took *wād-in-naml* to be the name of a valley and supposed that it was inhabited by the tribe of Banī an-Naml, it would be against the Arabic idiom and usage to speak of a member of the tribe as *namlah*. Although there are many Arab tribes which have been named after the animals, e.g. Kalb (dog), Asad (lion), etc., yet no Arab would ever say in respect of a member of the Kalb or the Asad tribe: "A dog said, or a lion said, etc." Therefore, it would be against the Arabic idiom to say in respect of a member of the Naml tribe: "A *namlah* (ant) said this." Then a member of the Naml tribe's warning the people of his tribe, saying, "O Namilites, get into your houses lest Solomon's hosts should trample you down without even knowing it," becomes meaningless. It has never happened that an army of men should have trampled down a group of men without knowing it. If the army has come with the intention of an attack, it would be useless for the other side to get into their houses, for in that case the invaders would follow them into their houses, and trample them more ruthlessly. And if the army is only on the routine march, it is just enough to clear off the way for it. Human beings may be harmed by the marching columns, but it can never happen that the soldiers on the march would trample down other men without knowing it. Therefore, if Banī an-Naml were a tribe of human beings, and one of its members were

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تَفَقَّدَ الظَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِي لَا أَرَى الْهُدَاهِدَ ۖ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ۗ
لَأَعَذِّبَنَّكَ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَا أَذْبَحُكَ أَوْ لِيَأْتِيَنِي بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِينٍ ۗ فَكَتَبَتْ
غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ ۗ
إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ۗ
وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّيْءِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ۗ^{٢٤} إِلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي
يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ۗ^{٢٥}
اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ۗ^{٢٦} قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ
مِنَ الْكٰذِبِينَ ۗ^{٢٧} إِذْ هَبَّ بِكِتٰبِي هَذَا فَالِقَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانظُرْ
مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ۗ^{٢٨} قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلٰٓؤُاِ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتٰبٌ كَرِيمٌ ۗ^{٢٩} إِنَّهُ مِنْ
سُلَيْمٰنَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۗ^{٣٠} إِلَّا تَعْلَمُونَ عَلَىٰ وَأْتُونِي مَسْلُومِينَ ۗ^{٣١}
قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلٰٓؤُاِ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّىٰ تَشْهَدُونِ ۗ^{٣٢}
قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلٰؤُاِ قُوَّةٍ وَأَوْلٰؤُاِ بِأَسِ شَدِيدٍ ۗ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا
تَأْمُرِينَ ۗ^{٣٣} قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمَلٰٓؤُكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ
أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً ۗ وَكَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ۗ^{٣٤} وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنظُرُهُمْ
يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ۗ^{٣٥} فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمٰنَ قَالَ أَتَيْدُونَنِ بِمَالٍ فَبِأَشْنَىٰ اللَّهُ
خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا أَتٰكُمْ ۗ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ۗ^{٣٦} ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ
لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صٰغِرُونَ ۗ^{٣٧} قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلٰٓؤُاِ
أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مَسْلُومِينَ ۗ^{٣٨} قَالَ عِفْرِيْتُكَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ

(On another occasion) Solomon reviewed his birds²⁷ and said, "How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Has he disappeared somewhere? I will punish him severely, or even slaughter him, unless he presents before me a reasonable excuse."²⁸ The bird did not take long when it came and said, "I have obtained knowledge of things of which you have no knowledge. I have brought sure information about Sabā'.²⁹ There I have seen a woman ruling over her people: she has been given all sorts of provisions, and she has a splendid throne. I saw that she and her people prostrate themselves before the sun, instead of Allah."³⁰ — Satan³¹ made their deeds seem fair to them,³² and hindered them from the highway: therefore, they do not find the right path that they may prostrate themselves before that God Who brings to light the hidden things of the heavens and the earth³³ and knows all that you conceal and reveal.³⁴ Allah: none but He is worthy of worship: He is the Owner of the glorious Throne.³⁵

Solomon said, "We shall just now see whether what you say is true, or that you are a liar. Take this letter of mine and cast it before them; then get aside and see what reaction they show."³⁶

The queen said, "O chiefs, a very important letter has been cast before me. It is from Solomon, and it begins with the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. It says, 'Do not adopt a rebellious attitude against me and present yourselves as Muslims before me'.³⁷

(Having read out the letter) the queen said, "O chiefs, counsel me in this matter; I do not take a decision in any matter without (consulting) you."³⁸ They replied, "We are a powerful people, and good fighters. The decision, however, rests with you. You may yourselves consider as to what command you should give." The queen said, "When the kings enter a land, they ruin it and debase its honourable people;³⁹ they do just the same.⁴⁰ I shall send to them a gift, and then wait to see with what reply my

envoys return.”

36-37

When (the envoy of the queen) came to Solomon, the king said, “Do you want to help me with wealth? What God has given me is much more than what He has given you.⁴¹ May you yourselves rejoice in your gift! (O messengers,) go back to your people; we shall bring against them such forces⁴² which they will not be able to withstand, and we shall drive them out (of their land) humbled and disgraced.”

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to warn his people, then in case of an attack, he would have said, “O Namilites, flee your houses and take refuge in the mountains lest Solomon’s armies should destroy you.” And in case there was no danger of an attack, he would have said, “O Namilites, clear off the way lest one of you should be harmed by the marching columns of Solomon’s armies.”

This error in the interpretation is on account of the Arabic idiom and the subject-matter. As for the name of the valley and the tribe of Bani an-Naml inhabiting it, it is a mere hypothesis for which there exists no scientific proof. Those who hold that *wād-in-naml* was the name of a valley have themselves pointed out that it had been so named because of the abundance of ants in it. Qatādah and Muqātil say, “It is a valley in the land of S̄yria where ants are found in abundance.” But in no book of history and geography and in no archaeological research it is mentioned that it was inhabited by a tribe called Banī an-Naml. Thus, it is merely a concoction that has been invented to support one’s own interpretation.

This story is also found in the Israelite traditions but its latter portion falls against the Qur’ān as well as against the regal dignity of the Prophet Solomon. According to it, when the Prophet Solomon was passing through a valley which abounded in ants, he heard an ant calling out to the other ants to say, “Get into your holes, otherwise you will be trampled down by Solomon’s hosts.” At this, Prophet Solomon displayed great vanity before the ant to which the ant rejoined, “What are you?—the product of a mere sperm-drop!” Hearing this the Prophet Solomon felt greatly ashamed. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, p. 440). This shows how the Qur’ān corrects the wrong traditions of the Israelites, and cleanses the filthy spots with which they had themselves branded the characters of their Prophets. It is these traditions about which the Western orientalist shamelessly claim that

the Qur'an has plagiarized them for its narratives.

Rationally also it is not at all inconceivable that an ant should warn members of its own species of an impending danger and tell them to get into their holes. As for the question as to how the Prophet Solomon heard it, the answer is this: It is not all difficult to understand the crude speech of an ant for a person whose senses can comprehend and receive a subtle message like the Word of Revelation.

25. "Restrain me...thanks to Thee" means this: "O my Lord! the wonderful powers and abilities that You have given me are such that if I become even a little forgetful and heedless, I might transgress the bounds of service and be puffed up with pride and go astray. Therefore, O my Lord, restrain me so that I may remain grateful to You for all Your blessings instead of being ungrateful."

26. "Admit me...righteous servants" probably implies this: "I should be included among the righteous in the Hereafter and should enter Paradise along with them." For a person who does righteous acts will automatically be righteous, but one's entry into Paradise in the Hereafter cannot come about merely on the strength of one's good works, but it will depend on Allah's mercy. According to a *Hadith*, the Holy Prophet once said, "Merely the deeds of any one of you will not enable him to enter Paradise." It was asked, "In your case too, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Yes, I also shall not enter Paradise only on the strength of my deeds, unless Allah Almighty covers me with His mercy."

This prayer of the Prophet Solomon on this occasion becomes irrelevant if *an-Naml* is taken to mean a tribe of human beings and *namlah* a member of that tribe. After all, there could be nothing extraordinary in the warning given by a member of a human tribe to the people of his tribe about the approaching troops of a powerful king that it should have induced the king to make such a prayer to Allah. However, a person's having such a wonderful power of comprehension that he may hear the speech of an ant from a distance and also understand it, is certainly something extraordinary, which can involve a person in self-conceit and vanity. In such a case only the prayer of the Prophet Solomon can be relevant.

27. That is, the birds whose troops, as mentioned above, were included in the armies of Prophet Solomon like the troops of the men and jinns. It is just possible that the Prophet Solomon had employed them for communicating messages, hunting and performing other such services.

28. Some people of the modern time say that the *hud-hud* (hoopoe) does not mean the bird commonly known by this name, but is the name of a man who was an officer in the army of Solomon. This claim is not

based on any historical research in which they might have found a person named *hud-hud* included in the list of the officers of the government of the Prophet Solomon, but they base their claim on the argument that the custom of naming human beings after animals is prevalent in Arabic as in other languages and was also found in Hebrew. Moreover, the work that has been ascribed to the *hud-hud* in the following verses and its conversation with the Prophet Solomon, can, according to them, be only performed by a human being. But if one keeps in view the context in which this thing occurs in the Qur'ān, it becomes evident that this is no commentary of the Qur'ān but its distortion. After all, why should the Qur'ān put the intellect and intelligence of man to the test by using enigmatic language? Why should it not clearly say that a soldier of the Prophet Solomon's cavalry, or platoon, or communication department, was missing, whom he ordered to be searched out, and who came and gave this news and whom he despatched on such and such a mission? Instead, it uses such language that the reader, from the beginning to the end, is compelled to regard it as a bird. Let us, in this connection, consider the facts in their sequence as presented in the Qur'ān.

First of all, the Prophet Solomon expresses his gratitude to Allah for His this bounty: "We have been taught the speech of the birds." In this sentence, firstly, the word *ṭair* has been used absolutely which every Arab and scholar of Arabic will take in the meaning of a bird, because there is nothing in the context that points to its being figurative; secondly, if *ṭair* implied a group of men and not a bird, the word language or tongue would have been used concerning it and not speech. Then, a person's knowing the tongue of another people is not so extraordinary a thing that it should be specially mentioned. Today there are among us thousands of men and women, who can speak and understand many foreign languages. This is in no way an unusual achievement which may be mentioned as an extraordinary gift of God.

Then the Qur'ān says, "For Solomon were gathered hosts of jinns and men and birds." In this sentence, firstly, the words *jinn* and *ins* (men) and *ṭair* have been used as names for three well-known and distinct species denoted by these words in Arabic. Then they have been used absolutely and there is nothing in the context that may point to any of them being used metaphorically, or as a simile, because of which one may take them in another meaning than their well-known lexical meaning. Then the word *ins* has occurred between the words *jinn* and *ṭair*, which does not allow taking it in the meaning that the *jinn* and the *ṭair* were, in fact, two groups included in the species of *ins* (men). Had this been meant the words would have been: *al-jinn waṭ-ṭair min-al-ins* and not *min-al-jinn wal-ins waṭ-ṭair*.

A little further on the Qur'ān says that the Prophet Solomon said this when during his review of the birds he found the *hud-hud* missing. If the *fair* were human beings and *hud-hud* also was the name of a man, a word or two should have been there to indicate this so that the poor reader should not have taken the word for a bird. When the group being mentioned is clearly of the birds and a member of it is called *hud-hud*, how can it be expected that the reader will of his own accord understand them to be human beings?

Then the Prophet Solomon says, "I will punish him severely, or even slaughter him, unless he presents before me a reasonable excuse." A man is killed, or hanged, or sentenced to death, but never slaughtered. Some hard-hearted person may even slaughter another person out of vengeance, but it cannot be expected of a Prophet that he would sentence a soldier of his army to be slaughtered only for the offence of desertion, and Allah would mention this heinous act of the Prophet without a word of disapproval.

A little further on we shall again see that the Prophet Solomon sends the same *hud-hud* with a letter to the queen of Sheba and tells him "to cast it before her". Obviously, such an instruction can be given to a bird but not at all to a man when he is sent as an envoy or messenger. Only a foolish person will believe that a king would send his envoy with a letter to the queen of another country and tell him to cast or throw it before her. Should we suppose that the Prophet Solomon was not aware of the preliminary social etiquette which even common people like us also observe when we send our servant to a neighbour? Will a gentleman tell his servant to carry his letter to the other gentleman and throw it before him?

All these things show that the word *hud-hud* here has been used in its lexical meaning, showing that he was not a man but a bird. Now, if a person is not prepared to believe that a *hud-hud* can speak those things that have been ascribed to it in the Qur'ān, he should frankly say that he does not believe in this narrative of the Qur'ān. It is sheer hypocrisy to misconstrue plain and clear words of the Qur'ān according to one's own whims only in order to cover up one's lack of faith in it.

29. Sabā' were a well-known commercial people of southern Arabia, whose capital city of Mā'rib lay about 55 miles to the north-east of San'ā', the present capital of Yaman. They rose to power after the decline of the Minaean kingdom in about 1100 B.C. and flourished for a thousand years in Arabia. Then in 115 B.C. they were replaced by the Himyarites, the other well-known people of southern Arabia, who ruled

Yaman and Ḥaḍramaut in Arabia and Ḥabash in Africa. The Sabaeans controlled the whole trade that passed between eastern Africa, India, the Far East and Arabia itself, on the one hand, and Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome on the other. That is why they were famous for their wealth in the ancient times; so much so that according to the Greek historians they were the richest people of the world. Besides trade and commerce, another great reason for their prosperity was that they had built dams here and there in their country to store rainwater for irrigation purposes, which had turned their whole land into a veritable garden. The Greek historians have made mention of the unusual greenery of their country; and the Qur'ān also refers to it in Sūrah Sabā': 15.

The statement of the *hud-hud*, "I have obtained knowledge of things of which you have no knowledge", does not imply that the Prophet Solomon was wholly unaware of Sabā'. Obviously, the ruler of Syria and Palestine whose kingdom extended to the northern shores of the Red Sea (Gulf of 'Aqabah), could not be unaware of a people who ruled the southern shores (Yaman) of the same Red Sea, and who also controlled an important part of the international trade. Moreover, according to Psalms, Solomon's father, Prophet David, knew Sabā'. We find the following words of his prayer in Psalms:

"Give the king thy judgement, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son (i.e. Solomon)... The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba (i.e. of Yaman's and Ḥabash's branches) shall offer gifts." (72: 1-2, 10-11).

Therefore, what the *hud-hud* means to say is this: "The knowledge of the things I have seen with my eyes in the central city of the Sabaeans, has not yet reached you."

30. This shows that the people of Sabā' at that time followed the religion of sun-worship, which is also supported by the ancient traditions of Arabia. Ibn Ishāq has cited the genealogists' saying to the effect that Sabā' have in fact descended from an ancestor whose name was 'Abd Shams (slave of the sun, or sun-worshipper) and title Sabā'. This is supported by the Israelite traditions as well. According to these when the *hud-hud* arrived with the Prophet Solomon's letter, the queen of Sheba was going for the worship of the sun-god, and it threw the letter on the way before the queen.

31. The style shows that the sentences from here to the end of the paragraph are not a part of the *hud-hud's* speech but its speech ended with: "they prostrate themselves before the sun", and these words are an addition by Allah to its speech. This opinion is supported by the sentence: "He knows all that you conceal and reveal." These words give the impression that the speaker and the addressees here are not the

hud-hud and the Prophet Solomon and his courtiers respectively, but the Speaker is Allah and the addressees the *mushriks* of Makkah, for whose admonition this story has been related. From among the commentators, 'Allāmah Ālūsī, the author of *Rūḥ-al-Ma'ānī*, also has preferred the same opinion.

32. That is, "Satan has made them believe that earning the worldly wealth and making their lives more and more grand and pompous is the only real and fit use of their mental and intellectual and physical powers. Apart from these, they need not think seriously on anything else: they need not bother themselves to see whether there was any factual reality behind the apparent life of the world or not, and whether the basis of their religion, morality, culture and system of life accorded with that Reality or went utterly against it. Satan satisfied them that when they were making adequate progress in respect of wealth and power and worldly grandeur, they had no need to see whether their beliefs and philosophies and theories were correct or not, for the only proof of their being correct was that they were earning wealth and enjoying life to their hearts' content."

33. That is, He is bringing continuously into existence those things which before their birth were hidden here and there: He is bringing out continuously countless kinds of vegetation and minerals from the bowels of the earth: He is manifesting from upper space such things as could not even be conceived by human mind before their manifestation.

34. That is, His knowledge embraces everything; the open and hidden are alike for Him; He is aware of everything.

By citing these two attributes of Allah the object is to impress that if they had not been deluded by Satan, they could have seen the right way clearly: they could have perceived that the hot burning sphere of the sun which has no sense of its own existence, did not deserve to be worshipped but worship was due to Him alone Who is the All-Knowing and the All-Wise Being, and Whose power is bringing into existence new and ever new phenomena every moment.

35. This is one of those verses of the Qur'ān, whose recital makes it obligatory for one to perform a *Sajdah* (prostration), and there is a consensus on this of the Muslim jurists. The object of performing a *Sajdah* here is that a believer should set himself apart from the sun-worshippers and should declare by his action that he does not regard the sun but Allah Almighty alone as his Deity and Lord.

36. Here ends the role of the *hud-hud* (hoopoe). The rationalists deny its being a bird for the reason that a bird could not possibly be endowed with such powers of observation, discrimination and expression that it should pass over a country and should come to know that it is the

land of Ṣabā', it has such and such a system of government, it is ruled by a certain woman, its religion is sun-worship, that it should have worshipped One God instead of having gone astray, and then on its return to the Prophet Solomon it should so clearly make a report of all its observations before him. Due to these very reasons the open atheists object that the Qur'ān is a book of fables and legends; then those who try to interpret the Qur'ān rationally misconstrue its clear words in order to prove that the *hud-hud* was not at all a bird but he was a man. But the question is: What scientific information have these gentlemen got by which they could tell with absolute certainty what powers and abilities the different species of animals and their different individuals have got? The information that they possess only consists of the results inferred from the grossly insufficient observation made cursorily by them of the life and behaviour of the animals. In fact, man has not so far been able to know through any certain means what different animals know and what they see and hear, and what they feel and think and understand, and how the mind of each one of them works. Yet, whatever little observation has been made of the life of the different species of animals, it has revealed some of their wonderful abilities. Now, when Allah, Who is the Creator of these animals, tells us that He had taught the speech of the birds to one of His Prophets and blessed him with the ability to speak to them, and the Prophet's taming and training had so enabled a *hud-hud* that it could make certain observations in the foreign lands and could report them to the Prophet, we should, in fact, be prepared to revise our little knowledge about the animals in the light of Allah's statement. But, instead, we commit the folly of taking our this insufficient knowledge as the criterion and belie this statement of Allah or distort it out of its true meaning.

37. That is, "The letter is important for several reasons: (1) It has reached me in an unusual way. Instead of an envoy it has been brought and dropped at me by a bird. (2) It is from Solomon, the great ruler of Palestine and Syria. (3) It has been begun with the name of Allah, the Compassionate, and Merciful, which is an unusual way of correspondence and is not followed by any kingdom in the world. (4) Then, it is also unusual that a letter should be written only in the name of Allah, the Exalted, apart from all other gods and goddesses. (5) The most important thing in it is that it quite clearly and plainly invites us to give up rebellion and adopt obedience and present ourselves before Solomon in submission (or as Muslims)."

"Present yourselves as Muslims" can have two meanings: (1) "Present yourselves in submission"; and (2) "present yourselves as Muslims (after

embracing Islam)." The first meaning is in accordance with the Prophet Solomon's position as a ruler, and the second with his position as a Prophet. Probably this comprehensive word was used in order to convey both the meanings through the letter. The same sort of invitation has always been extended by Islam to independent nations and governments that they should either accept Islam and become equal partners in the Islamic system of life, or surrender political independence and submit to the system of Islam and pay *Jizyah*.

38. The words used in the Text are: *hattā tash-hu-dūn* (unless you are present, or unless you bear witness). That is: "I regard your presence necessary when I take a decision in important matters, and also that whatever decision I take you should be there to testify that it is right and correct." This shows that though the system of government among Sabā' was kingship, it was not tyrannical; but the ruler of the time decided matters in consultation with the important people in the government.

39. In this one sentence a thorough criticism has been made of imperialism. The kings' invasion of the other countries and the victorious nations' violence against the oppressed nations has never been for the sake of reform and goodwill. The object has been to control and exploit the means and resources of sustenance granted to the other nation by God, and make it so helpless that it should never be able to rise in resistance and demand its share. For this purpose they block up all its means of prosperity, power and honour, crush down all self-respecting elements, instil in its members attitudes of slavery, flattery, treachery and spying against one another, imitation of the conqueror and respect for his civilization, contempt of their own civilization and other such mean qualities of character. Thus, gradually they bring them down to such a low level of character where they may not hesitate even to sell off any of their most sacred objects of heritage and be ready to perform any wretched service on payment.

40. This sentence has two meanings and both are equally probable: (1) It may be a part of the queen of Sheba's speech, which she might have added in order to emphasize her foregoing words; and (2) it may be Allah's Words which have been added as a parenthesis in support of the queen's speech.

41. This sentence is not meant to express pride and vanity. What it means to say is this: "I have no desire for your wealth; I only desire that you should believe, or at least submit to a righteous system. If you agree to neither of these alternatives, it is not possible for me to accept the bribes of wealth and leave you free in the matter of a poly-

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أَنَا أَيْتِكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ
 الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا
 رَآهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لَتَبْلِيْبُونِي ؕ أَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَمَنْ
 شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ نَكُرُوا لَهَا
 عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ
 أَهَذَا عَرْشُكِ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ ؕ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾
 قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقِيهَا
 قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُمَرَّدٌ مِّنْ قَوَارِيرَ ؕ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَاسْمُتُ
 مَعَ السُّلَيْمِ ﴿٢٢﴾ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا
 أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَيْنِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ
 بِالتَّيْسَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ ؕ لَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالُوا
 أَظَلَمْنَا بِكَ وَبِئْسَ مَعَكَ قَالَ ظَلِمْنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾
 وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالُوا
 تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ
 وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَانظُرْ
 كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ ؕ إِنَّا دَمَرْنَاهُمْ وَاقْتُلْنَاهُمْ وَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ فِي بَيْتِهِمْ
 خَاوِيَةً يَبْمَا ظَلَمُوا ؕ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَانجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ
 اسْتَوُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَوْ طَا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَنَا تُونَ الْفَاجِئَةِ وَأَنْتُمْ

To his courtiers Solomon⁴³ said, "Which of you can fetch me her throne before those people come to me in submission?"⁴⁴ A mighty one from among the jinns submitted, "I shall fetch it to you even before you rise from your place⁴⁵: I possess the necessary power for it and am trustworthy."⁴⁶ He who possessed knowledge of the Book, spoke out, "I will fetch it to you in the twinkling of an eye."⁴⁷ As soon as Solomon saw the throne placed before him, he exclaimed: "This is by the Grace of my Lord so that He may test me (to see) whether I am grateful or ungrateful!"⁴⁸ And the one who is grateful is grateful only for the good of his own self; as for the one who is ungrateful, my Lord is All-Sufficient and Self-Exalted."⁴⁹ 38-40

Solomon said,⁵⁰ "Set her throne before her casually; let us see whether she reaches the truth, or she is one of those who are not guided aright."⁵¹ When the queen arrived, she was asked, "Is your throne like this?" She replied, "It is just the same."⁵² We had already known this and we had surrendered (or we had become Muslims)."⁵³ The worship of the deities whom she served instead of Allah had hindered her (from believing), for she came of an unbelieving people.⁵⁴ 41-43

She was asked to enter the palace. When she saw it, she thought it was a pool of water, so she tucked up her skirt to enter it. Solomon said, "It is the glossy floor of glass."⁵⁵ At this she exclaimed, "O my Lord! I have (hitherto) been unjust to myself; now I submit myself, with Solomon, to Allah, Lord of the worlds."⁵⁶ 44

And⁵⁷ to Thamūd We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ (with the message) that they should worship Allah, but they divided themselves forthwith into two wrangling groups.⁵⁸ Ṣāliḥ said, "O my people, why do you hasten for the evil in preference to the good?⁵⁹ Why don't you ask forgiveness of Allah? Maybe that you are shown mercy." They said, "We regard you and your companions as a sign of bad omen."⁶⁰ Ṣāliḥ said, "Your good and bad omens 45-47

issue forth from Allah. The fact is that you are a people on trial."⁶¹

48-53

There were in that city nine ring-leaders of the men,⁶² who spread mischief in the land and reformed nothing. They said to one another, "Let us pledge on an oath by Allah that we shall attack Ṣāliḥ and his household by night, and then tell his guardian⁶³ that we were not even present at the time his family were killed: we are telling the truth."⁶⁴ They plotted thus, and We too devised a plot of which they were unaware.⁶⁵ Just see how their plot ended. We annihilated them and all their people together. There, their houses lie desolate in consequence of their wicked deeds. There is a lesson in this for those who have knowledge;⁶⁶ and We saved those who had believed and avoided disobedience.

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theistic and wicked system of life. What my Lord has given me is enough for me to cherish any desire for your wealth."

42. There is a subtle gap between this and the previous sentence, which one can easily fill up by a careful study of the discourse. It means this: "O messengers, take this gift back to the people who have sent you. They will either have to yield to our first proposal, i. e. they should come before us as Muslims, or we shall bring forces against them."

43. The details of the story that have been omitted are to the effect: The envoys returned to the queen with the gift and made a report of what they had seen and heard; the queen decided on the basis of what she heard about the Prophet Solomon to make a visit to Jerusalem to see him personally; she left Sabā' for Palestine accompanied by her royal entourage and sent a message to Solomon's court that she was herself coming to personally hear the invitation from the king himself and to have a direct talk with him. Here, the story is resumed from the time when the queen had reached near Jerusalem and was going to appear before Solomon in a day or two.

44. That is, the same throne about which the hoopoe (*hud-hud*) had reported, "She has a splendid throne." Some commentators have given a strange interpretation here. They say that the Prophet Solomon wanted to have the throne before him before the queen's arrival because he wanted to take possession of it. For he feared that if the queen became a Muslim, it would be unlawful to take possession of her

property without her approval; therefore, he made haste to have the queen's throne with him even before her arrival in Jerusalem because at that time it was lawful to take it into his possession. May Allah pardon us! This is a strange concept about the intention of a Prophet. Why should one not understand the verse in the light that Prophet Solomon wanted to show a miracle also to the queen and her courtiers besides preaching his message so that she might know what extraordinary powers Allah, Lord of the worlds, had granted to His Prophet so that she might be convinced that Solomon was surely a Prophet of Allah? Some modern commentators have put an even more strange meaning on this verse. They translate the verse thus: "Which of you can bring me a throne for the queen?" whereas the Qur'an has used the word *bi-'arshi-hā*, which means "her throne", and not *bi-'arshi-lahī*, "a throne for her". They mis-translate the verse in order to get rid of what the Qur'an has stated that the Prophet Solomon wanted the queen's own throne to be brought from Yaman to Jerusalem and that too before the queen's arrival.

45. From this it becomes obvious whether the jinns under the Prophet Solomon were, according to the interpretation of some rationalist commentators of the modern times, from among mankind or from among the hidden creation commonly known as jinns. Obviously, the sitting of the Prophet Solomon's court would at the most be of three to four hours, and the distance of Mā'rib, capital of Sabā', from Jerusalem was, even as the crow flies, not less than 1500 miles. To fetch a splendid throne of a queen from such a distant place in such a short time could not be possible for a man, even if he be a very strong and robust person. This task cannot be performed even by a jet plane of today. The throne was not lying in a jungle from where it had just to be fetched. It lay in a queen's palace, which must have been well-guarded, and in the absence of the queen it must have been kept in a secure place. If a man had gone to fetch it, he should have been accompanied by a commando force so that he could overwhelm the guards and snatch away the throne. How could all this be accomplished before the rising of the court? This thing can be conceived only in connection with a real jinn!

46. That is, "You can trust me in that I will not carry it away, nor steal any valuable thing from it."

47. Nothing is known with certainty as to who this person was, what special knowledge he had and what Book is referred to here, whose knowledge he had. No explanation of these things has been given either in the Qur'an or in any authentic *Hadith*. Some of the

commentators say that it was an angel; others say that it was a man. Then they differ as to the identity of the man. Someone mentions the name of Āsaf bin Barchiah, who, according to the rabbinical traditions, was the Prince of Men. Someone says that he was Khidr; someone mentions some other name; and Imām Rāzī insists that it was the Prophet Solomon himself. But none of these has any reliable source for his information, and Imām Rāzī's opinion does not even fit in with the Qur'ānic context. Likewise, about the Book also the commentators differ. Someone says that it refers to *Lauh-i-Mahfūz* (the Preserved Tablet) and some other takes it for the Book of Law. But all this is mere guess-work. Similar guesses have been made about the knowledge the man had from the Book. We only know and believe what has been said in the Qur'ān, or what becomes evident from its words. In any case the person was not from among the jinns, and possibly he was a man. He possessed some extraordinary knowledge, which had been derived from some Divine Book (*al-Kitāb*). The jinn had claimed to fetch the throne within a few hours by means of his physical strength; this man fetched it in a moment by the power of his knowledge.

48. The words of the Qur'ān are very clear in this regard. This person's claim did not remain a claim like the jinn's, but, in fact, as soon as he made the claim the throne was seen placed before the Prophet Solomon the next moment. Just consider these words:

"The person said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' As soon as Solomon saw the throne placed before him. . . ."

Anyone who reads these words, regardless of the extraordinary nature of the event, will surely understand that no sooner did the person utter these words than the event as claimed by him took place forthwith. There is, therefore, no need to make far-fetched interpretations of this plain matter. Then, on seeing the throne, the Prophet Solomon's exclaiming, "This is by the Grace of my Lord so that He may test me (to see) whether I am grateful or ungrateful!" can be relevant only if the event be extraordinary; otherwise if only a skilful craftsman of the king had hurriedly made or arranged a throne for the queen, it could not be so novel an event at which the Prophet Solomon should have spontaneously exclaimed: "This is by the Grace of my Lord!.." and feared that the prompt arrangement of a throne for the honourable guest might cause him to become ungrateful to Allah instead of being grateful. After all, there could be no question of a believing ruler's becoming involved in vanity and self-conceit on this small achievement, especially when he was not merely an ordinary believer but a Prophet of Allah.

As for the question as to how a royal throne was fetched over a distance of 1,500 miles in the twinkling of an eye, it can be briefly answered thus: "The concepts of time and space, and matter and movement, that we have formed on the basis of our experiments and observations, are only applicable to us. These concepts are not correct in respect to God, nor is He bound by these. Not to speak of an ordinary throne, His power can make the sun, and even much larger stars, travel millions of millions of miles in the matter of moments. The God Who by His one command brought this huge universe into being, had the power to have moved the throne of the queen of Sheba at a speed greater than the speed of light. In this very Qur'an it has been stated that Allah, by His powers, took his servant Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) from Makkah to Jerusalem and also brought him back in the same night.

49. That is, He does not stand in need of somebody's gratefulness. His Godhead is neither enhanced by an iota by somebody's gratefulness nor diminished by that amount by somebody's ingratitude or thanklessness. He is a Sovereign in His own right. His Sovereignty is not dependent on His creation's acknowledgement or rejection. The same thing has been expressed in the Qur'an through the Prophet Moses: "If you prove thankless, you and all the dwellers of the earth, (you should know that) Allah is All-Sufficient and worthy of all praise by Himself." (Ibrahim : 8). The same theme is contained in a *Hadith Qudsī* related in Muslim, saying :

"Allah says : O My servants, if you all men and jinns, from the beginning to the end, together become like the heart of the most righteous person among you, it will not cause any increase in My Kingdom; and O My servants, if you all men and jinns, from the beginning to the end, together become like the heart of the most sinful person among you, it will not cause any decrease in My Kingdom. O My servants, it is your own deeds which I credit to your account, and then fully recompense you for them. So, whoever receives something good, let him be grateful to Allah, and whoever receives something else, let him curse his own self only".

50. As to how the queen reached Jerusalem and how she was received, has been omitted. The story is resumed from the time when she had arrived at the palace to see Prophet Solomon.

51. This is a meaningful sentence, which means: (1) "Whether she understands or not that it is her own throne which has been fetched in no time from her capital to a distant place like Jerusalem;" and also (2) "whether she is guided aright after seeing this wonderful miracle, or persists in her error." This refutes the wrong idea of

the people who say that the Prophet Solomon intended to take possession of the throne. Here he himself clearly says that he had done this in order to help the queen see Guidance.

52. This also refutes the speculations of those people who depict the event in a manner as though the Prophet Solomon wanted to have a throne made for the queen; and for this purpose he invited tenders and a strong, robust artisan offered to make him a throne in the matter of a few hours, but an expert craftsman submitted that he could make and produce it in no time. This whole guess-work is destroyed by the fact that Solomon himself ordered the throne to be fetched before him (v. 38), and when it had been fetched, ordered his servants to set it before the queen casually (v. 41), and then when she arrived, she was asked whether her throne was like that (v. 42), and she answered, "It is just the same." Obviously, there could be no room for the absurd interpretations in the face of such a clear statement of facts. If there is still any doubt left, it can be satisfied by the next sentence.

53. That is, "Even before we saw this miracle we had been convinced by what we had heard of Solomon (peace be upon him) that he was a Prophet of Allah, and not merely a ruler of a kingdom." After seeing the throne and saying, "It is just the same", what could be the relevance of adding this sentence if it is supposed that the Prophet Solomon had got a throne manufactured and set the same before her? Even if it is supposed that no effort was spared to have a throne manufactured closely resembling the queen's what special excellence it could have to make a sun-worshipping queen exclaim: "We had already known this and we had become Muslims!"

54. This sentence has been added by Allah to clarify the queen's position, saying that she was not obdurate and stubborn. She had been an unbeliever till then mainly because she came of an unbelieving people. As she had become accustomed to bowing down before a false deity since her childhood, it had become a hindrance for her to the right way. As soon as she came in contact with the Prophet Solomon, she discerned the right way and the hindrance was removed forthwith.

55. This was the last thing that opened the queen's eyes. The first thing was Solomon's letter that had been begun with the name of the All-Compassionate, the All-Merciful Allah, a way different from the common custom prevalent among the kings. The second was his rejection of her gifts, which made the queen understand that he was a different kind of a king. The third was the report made by the queen's envoys from which she came to know about Solomon's pious life, his wisdom and his message of the Truth. This very thing had

induced her to travel to Jerusalem herself to personally meet the Prophet Solomon, and to this she had referred when she said, "We had already known this and we had become Muslims." The fourth thing was the removal of her throne from Mā'rib to Jerusalem in no time, from which the queen realized that he had Allah's power at his back. Now this was the last thing that removed every doubt from her mind regarding the unique and great personality of the Prophet Solomon. When she saw that in spite of possessing every means of comfort and ease and a grand palace for a dwelling, he was so free from every conceit, so God-fearing and righteous and so grateful to God that he bowed before Him for every small favour and his life so different from the life of those who were enamoured of the world, she exclaimed the words that follow.

56. This story of the Prophet Solomon and the queen of Sheba has been related in the Old and the New Testaments and the Israelite traditions in different ways, but the Qur'ānic narration differs from all others. A resume of the story as given in the Old Testament is as follows:

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company . . . when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions . . . And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, *It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thine wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne . . .* And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon . . . And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked . . . So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants." (2 Chronicles, 9 : 1-12. A similar account is also found in I Kings, 10: 1-13).

In the New Testament, the following sentence only has been reported

from a discourse of the Prophet Jesus about the queen of Sheba :

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” (Matthew, 12: 42; Luke, 11 : 31).

The story of the Prophet Solomon and the queen of Sheba as given in the rabbinical traditions resembles in most parts with the Qur'ānic version. The hoopoe's absence, then its arrival and reporting about Sheba and its queen, the Prophet Solomon's sending her a letter through it, the hoopoe's dropping the letter in front of the queen right at the time when she was going for sun-worship, the queen's calling for her ministers' council, then her sending of valuable gifts to Solomon, her travelling to Jerusalem and meeting him personally, her arrival at the palace and thinking that Prophet Solomon was sitting in the midst of a pool of water, tucking up her skirt in order to enter it—all this has been mentioned in these traditions as in the Qur'ān. But there is no mention whatsoever in these traditions of the Prophet Solomon's reply on receipt of the gift, having the queen's throne fetched from Mā'rib, his bowing down before God in thankfulness for every favour of His, and the queen's embracing the Faith ultimately, at his hand, his belief in the oneness of God, etc. And worst of all, these wicked people have accused Prophet Solomon of having committed adultery, God forbid, with the queen of Sheba, giving rise to an illegitimate race, which gave birth to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who destroyed Jerusalem. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, p. 443). The fact of the matter is that a section of the Jewish learned men have been highly critical of the Prophet Solomon. They have accused him of heinous crimes like violating the Commandments of the Torah, of pride of government, pride of wisdom, of being a hen-pecked husband, and of luxurious living, polytheism and idol-worship. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, pp. 439-441). It is due to this propaganda that the Bible presents him only as a king instead of a Prophet, a king who was lost in the love of polytheistic women against the Divine Commandments, whose heart was turned away from God, and was turned to other gods and goddesses. (I Kings, 11 : 1-11). As against this it can be seen what great favour has the Qur'ān done to the Israelites by cleansing the personalities of their elders of the filth thrown at them by themselves, and yet the Israelites, ungrateful as they are, look upon the Qur'ān and him who brought it as their enemies.

57. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf : 73-79, Hūd : 61-68, Ash-Shu'arā' : 141-159, Al-Qamar : 23-32, Ash-Shams : 11-15.

58. That is, as soon as the Prophet Ṣāliḥ embarked on his mission,

his people were divided into two groups, the believers and the disbelievers, and a conflict started between them as stated elsewhere in the Qur'an:

‘The chiefs of his tribe, who were full of pride, said to those who had believed from among the oppressed people, ‘Do you know it for certain that Ṣāliḥ is a Messenger from his Lord?’ They replied, ‘Indeed, we believe in the message with which he has been sent.’ But those who had arrogant assumption of superiority, said, ‘We deny that which you believe.’” (Al-A'rāf: 75-76).

One should note that precisely the same situation arose in Makkah at the advent of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him). The nation was divided into two factions and a conflict started between them. Therefore, this story fully applied to the conditions in which these verses were revealed.

59. That is, “Why do you hasten in asking for a torment instead of some good from Allah?” The following saying of the chiefs of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ's people has been related at another place: “O Ṣāliḥ, bring that scourge with which you threaten us, if you really are one of the Messengers.” (Al-A'rāf:77).

60. One meaning of what they said is this: “Your this movement has proved to be an evil omen for us. Since you and your companions have revolted against the ancestral religion, one or the other calamity is befalling us almost daily, because our deities have become angry with us. In this sense, this saying is similar to the sayings of most of those polytheistic nations who regarded their Prophets as ominous. In Sūrah Yā Sin, for instance, a nation has been mentioned, which said to its Prophet: “We regard you as an evil omen for ourselves.” (v. 18) The same thing was said by the Pharaoh's people about the Prophet Moses: “Whenever a good time came, they would say, ‘This is but our due’, and when there was a bad time, they would ascribe their calamities to Moses and his companions.” (Al-A'rāf: 130) Almost similar things were said in Makkah about the Holy Prophet also.

The other meaning of their saying is this: “Your advent has stirred up divisions in our nation. Before this we were a united people, who followed one religion. Your ominous coming has turned brother against brother, and separated son from father.” This very accusation was being brought against the Holy Prophet by his opponents over and over again. Soon after he started his mission of inviting the people to the Faith, the delegation of the chiefs of the Quraish, who went to Abū Ṭālib, had said, “Give up to us this nephew of yours: he has opposed your religion and your forefathers' religion and has sown discord among your people, and has held the whole nation as foolish.” (Ibn Hishām,

[Contd. on p. 40

تُبْصِرُونَ ۝۵۴ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ
 قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ۝۵۵ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّن
 قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ ۝۵۶ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَاهَا
 مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ۝۵۷ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءً مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ ۝۵۸ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ
 لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى ۚ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۝۵۹

الجزء (٢٠)

مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا

بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُثْبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا ۚ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ
 بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ۝۶۰ أَمْ مَنْ جَعَلَ الْآرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَ
 جَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ۚ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
 لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝۶۱ أَمْ مَنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ
 خُلَفَاءَ الْآرْضِ ۚ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا ۝۶۲ مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝۶۳ أَمْ مَنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ
 اللَّيْلِ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ
 تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۝۶۴ أَمْ مَنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَمَنْ يَرِزُكُمْ
 مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝۶۵
 قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ
 أَيَّانَ يَبْعَثُونَ ۝۶۶ بَلِ ادْرِكْ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ نَسْبَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۚ بَلْ
 هُمْ مِنْهَا عَمُونَ ۝۶۷ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاءُنَا آيَاتًا
 لَّمْ نُخْرَجُونَ ۝۶۸ لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ
 الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝۶۹ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ۝۷۰

٥٤٨

And We sent Lot.⁶⁷ Remember the time when he said to his people, "Do you commit indecency while you see it?"⁶⁸ Do you leave women and seek men for the gratification of your sexual desire? The fact is that you are a people steeped in ignorance."⁶⁹ But the only reply his people gave was to say, "Expel the family of Lot from your habitation: they pose to be very pious." At last We saved him and his family except his wife about whom We had decreed that she would linger behind,⁷⁰ and rained on them a rain, an extremely evil rain for the people who had been warned.

(O Prophet)⁷¹ say, "Praise is for Allah and peace upon those servants of His whom He has chosen." 59

(Ask them:) "Is Allah better or those deities whom they set up as His associates?"⁷²

Well, Who is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rainwater for you from the sky, then caused to spring up by it beautiful gardens, whose trees you had no power to cause to grow? Is there besides Allah another god (who is His associate in these works)?⁷³ (Nay,) but these people themselves have strayed from the right path. 60

And Who is it Who made the earth as a place of rest⁷⁴ and caused in it rivers to flow, and set in it firm mountains and placed barriers between the two bodies of water?⁷⁵ Is there besides Allah another god (who is His associate in these works)? Nay, but most of these people have no knowledge. 61

Who is it Who listens to the oppressed one when he invokes Him, and Who relieves him of his affliction?⁷⁶ And (Who is it Who) makes you vicegerents in the earth?⁷⁷ Is there besides Allah another god (to do this)? How little you reflect! 62

And Who is it Who shows you the way in the darkness of the land and the sea,⁷⁸ and Who sends the winds as harbingers of His mercy?⁷⁹ Is there besides Allah another god (who does this)? Far exalted is Allah above what they 63

associate with Him.

64 And Who is it Who originates the creation and then reproduces it?⁸⁰ And Who provides you sustenance from the sky and the earth?⁸¹ Is there besides Allah another god (who is a partner in these works)? Say, "Bring your proof if you are truthful."⁸²

65 Tell them, "None but Allah has the knowledge of the unseen, in the heavens and the earth,⁸³ and they (your deities) do not even know when they will be raised back to life."⁸⁴

66-69 But (on the contrary,) these people have lost the knowledge of the Hereafter; nay, they are in doubt about it; nay, they are blind to it.⁸⁵ The disbelievers say, "When we and our forefathers have become dust, shall we be really raised up from the graves? This news has been given to us as well as to our forefathers before us, but these are nothing but tales, which we have been hearing since the ancient times." Say to them, "Move about in the land and see what doom the criminals have met."⁸⁶

Contd from p. 37]

Vol. I, p. 285). On the occasion of Hajj, when the disbelievers of Makkah feared that the visitors from outside might be influenced by the Holy Prophet, they held consultations and decided to approach the Arab tribes and tell them: "This man is a sorcerer, who by his sorcery separates son from his father, brother from his brother, wife from her husband, and man from his family." (Ibn Hishām, p. 289).

61. That is, "The truth is not that which you understand it to be. The fact which you have not yet realized is that my advent has put you to the test. Until my arrival you were following a beaten track in your ignorance. You could not recognize the truth from the falsehood; you had no criterion for judging the genuine from the counterfeit; your worst people were lording it over your best people, who were rolling in the dust. But now a criterion has come against which you will all be judged and assessed. Now a balance has been set up publicly, which will weigh everybody according to his true worth. Now both the truth and the falsehood have been made manifest. Whoever accepts the truth will weigh heavy whether he was not being held even worth a farthing so far; and whoever persists in falsehood will not weigh a gramme even though

he was being esteemed as the chief of the chiefs before this. Now the judgement will not be based on the nobility or otherwise of the family one came of, or the abundance of the means and resources that one possessed, or one's physical strength but on this whether one accepted the truth gracefully or preferred to remain attached to falsehood."

62. That is, nine chiefs of the tribes each of whom had a band of followers with him.

63. "The guardian": the chief of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ's tribe, who, according to the ancient tribal tradition and custom, could make a claim to blood vengeance. The same was the position in Makkah of the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib. The Quraish were hesitant that if they attacked and killed the Holy Prophet, Abū Ṭālib, the chief of Banī Hāshim, would come out with a claim to blood vengeance on behalf of his clan.

64. This precisely was the kind of plot which the Makkan chiefs of the clans were devising against the Holy Prophet, and they devised the same ultimately on the occasion of the migration (*Hijrah*) to kill him. They decided that men from all the clans would attack him in a body so that the Banī Hāshim could not hold any one of the clans as responsible for the murder, and, therefore, would find it impossible to fight all of them at one and the same time.

65. That is, "Before they could make the night attack on the Prophet Ṣāliḥ at the appointed time Allah sent down His scourge which destroyed their whole nation completely. It appears that they made this plot after hamstringing the she-camel. According to Sūrah Hūd: 65, when they had killed the she-camel, Prophet Ṣāliḥ gave them a notice to enjoy life in their houses for three more days, for then they would be seized by the torment. At this they might have thought that the torment with which Ṣāliḥ threatened them might come or might not, but they must take the vengeance on Ṣāliḥ himself. Therefore, most probably they chose the same night for the attack which Allah had appointed for sending down the torment, and thus were struck down by Allah even before they could touch the Prophet Ṣāliḥ."

66. That is, "The ignorant people will say, 'There is no link between the Prophet Ṣāliḥ and his she-camel and the earthquake which struck the people of Thamūd. These things have their natural causes. Their occurrence or otherwise has nothing to do with the piety and wickedness of the people of a place, with their high-handedness or their show of mercy. It is meaningless merely to say that such and such a city or land was filled with sin and wickedness, and therefore, it was overwhelmed by flood, or its habitation turned up side down by an earthquake, or it

was ruined by a sudden disaster'." But the people who possess knowledge know that this universe is not being ruled by a deaf and blind God, but by an All-Wise, All-Knowing One Who is deciding the destinies. His decisions are not subject to physical causes, but the physical causes are subject to His will. His decisions to debase or exalt nations are not taken blindly but with wisdom and justice. In His Book of Law there is also included the principle of retribution, according to which the wicked are made to suffer for their evil deeds even in this world, on moral grounds. The people who are aware of these realities, cannot explain away the occurrence of an earthquake by citing physical and natural causes; they will rather look upon them as the scourge of warning for themselves, and they will learn lessons from it. They will try to understand those moral causes because of which the Creator annihilated a flourishing nation, which He Himself had created. They will divert their conduct and attitude from the track that brings Allah's wrath to the way that joins them to His mercy.

67. For comparison, See Al-A'rāf: 80-84; Hūd, 74-83, Al-Hijr : 57-77, Al-Anbiyā' : 71-75, Ash-Shu'arā' : 160-174, Al-'Ankabūt : 28-75, Aṣ-Ṣāffāt : 133-138, Al-Qamar : 33-39.

68. This can have several meanings and probably all are implied: (1) "That you are not unaware of this act's being wicked, but you commit it knowing it to be so" ; (2) "You are also not unaware that the man has not been created for the man's sex satisfaction but the woman, and the distinction between them (man and woman) is not such as you cannot perceive, yet with open eyes you commit this abominable act." (3) "You indulge in this indecency publicly when there are people watching you", as stated in Sūrah 'Ankabūt: 29, thus: "... and you indulge in indecencies in your assemblies."

69. The word *jahālat* here has been used in the sense of folly and stupidity. But even if it is taken in the sense of ignorance and lack of knowledge, it will mean: "You do not know the evil consequences of your acts. You only know that you are deriving sensual pleasure, but you do not know what severe punishment awaits you for this criminal and heinous pleasure-seeking. The scourge of Allah is ready to strike you but you are engaged in a senseless, filthy game with impunity."

70. That is, "The Prophet Lot had already been instructed not to take the woman along because she had to be destroyed along with her people."

71. From here starts the second discourse, and this is its introductory sentence. This introduction teaches how the Muslims should begin a

speech. That is why the truly Islamic-minded people have always been starting their speeches and discourses with the praise of Allah and salutation on His righteous servants. But now this is looked upon as characteristic of bigotry, and the present-day Muslim speakers have no idea of starting their speech with these words, or feel shy of doing so.

72. Superficially the question whether Allah is better or the false deities appears to be odd. As a matter of fact, there can be no question of goodness in the false gods and, therefore, they cannot be compared to Allah. As for the polytheists, even they had no misconception that Allah could be compared to their gods. But they were asked this question in order to be warned against their error. For obviously none in the world would do anything unless he saw some good in it. Now if the polytheists served their deities and implored them for their needs instead of Allah, and presented their offerings before them, this would be meaningless unless they perceived some good in them. That is why they have been explicitly asked to consider whether Allah is better or their deities, for they could not face and answer this forth-right question. Even the most hardened polytheist among them could not venture to say that their deities were better. But if they acknowledged that Allah is better it would demolish their whole creed, for then it would be unreasonable to adopt the inferior against the superior creed.

Thus, the Qur'ān at the very outset made the opponents helpless. After this, pointed questions have been asked, one after the other, about the manifestations of the power and creation of Allah to the effect: "Whose works are these? Is there besides Allah any other god also associated with these works? If not, why have you then set up these others as your deities?"

According to traditions, whenever the Holy Prophet recited this verse, he would immediately respond to it, saying: "Nay, but Allah is better, and He alone is the Everlasting and Exalted and High."

73. No one from among the *mushriks* could answer that someone other than Allah had done these works, or someone else was Allah's associate in doing these. The Qur'ān at other places says with respect to the pagans of Makkah and the Arab *mushriks*: "If you ask them, 'Who has created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say: 'The All-Mighty, the All-Knowing One has created them'." (Az-Zukhruf : 9) "And if you ask them, Who has created them? they will surely say, 'Allah'." (Az-Zukhruf : 87), "If you ask them, 'Who sent down rain-water from the sky and thereby raised the dead earth back to life?' They will surely say, 'Allah'." (Al-'Ankabūt: 63). "Ask them: Who pro-

vides for you from the heavens and the earth? Who has power over these faculties of hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who controls and directs the system of the universe?' They will surely say, 'Allah'." (Yūnus : 31). Not only the polytheists of Arabia but of the whole world generally acknowledged, and acknowledge even today, that Allah is the Creator of the universe and He alone controls and directs its system. Therefore, none of them could answer this question even obstinately for the sake of the argument that their deities were Allah's associates in those works, for if he had done so, thousands of his own people would have belied him saying that that was not their belief.

This and the other questions that follow not only contain a refutation of the creed of *shirk* (polytheism) but of atheism as well. For example, in this first very question, it has been asked, "Who has sent down rainwater and caused to spring up by it beautiful gardens?" Just consider whether the presence of the substances essential for the growth of countless kinds of plant life, in the soil or near the soil, and the existence in water of those very qualities which are in accordance with the requirements of animal and vegetable life, and the evaporation of this water again and again from the seas, and its condensation and raining regularly in different parts of the earth from time to time, and the coordination between the soil and the air, the water, the temperature, etc., conducive to proper growth of plant life and fulfilment, of the countless requirements of every sort of animal life, could be just accidental, or the result of the wise scheming and planning of the supreme power and will of an All-Wise Designer. And is it possible that this accident should continue to recur constantly for millions and millions of years on end? Only an obstinate person who has been blinded by prejudice will regard it as accidental, for no truth-loving, sensible person can make such a senseless claim or accept it.

74. It is not a simple thing for the earth to be a place of rest for the countless kinds of different creations living on it. If man looks into the wise harmony and coordination with which this sphere of the earth has been established, he is simply amazed and starts feeling that these harmonies and concordances and relations could not be brought about without the grand design of an All-Wise, All-Knowing and All-Powerful God. This sphere of the earth is floating in space and is not resting on anything, yet there is no commotion and no vibration in its movement. Had there been any vibration in it, such as we experience during an earthquake, life could not exist here. This sphere comes before the sun and hides from it regularly, which causes

the alternation of the day and night. Had it turned the same face perpetually towards the sun and kept the other side always hidden, no life could be possible here, for on the bright side all life would have been shrivelled up, and on the dark side all life would have been frozen to death. The sphere is enveloped by a five hundred mile thick atmosphere, which protects it against the continual bombardment of meteors, otherwise the twenty million meteors on the average, which dart towards the earth daily at 30 miles per second, would have caused such destruction as would not have allowed any man, animal or tree to survive. The same atmosphere controls the temperature, raises clouds from the oceans, carries water to different parts of the earth and provides the required gases that sustain the human, animal and plant life. Without it the earth could not become a fit place of rest for any kind of animal life. Just under the earth's surface all those minerals and chemicals which are essential to the survival of vegetable and animal life have been provided in abundance. Wherever these natural resources do not exist, the land there cannot sustain any kind of life. A great store of water has been arranged on the earth in the form of oceans, rivers, lakes, springs and underground channels and snow on the mountains which melts and flows down in the form of rivers. Without such an arrangement there could be no life. Then the earth has been endowed with an appropriate gravitational pull by which it keeps the water and the air and all other things found on it attracted to it. If this pull had been a little less strong, it could not have stopped the air and the water from escaping. It would also have so much increased the temperature that life here would have become difficult. On the other hand, if the gravitational pull had been a little stronger, the atmosphere would have been denser, its pressure would have increased, evaporation would have become difficult and rains impossible; the cold would have increased and less areas on earth would have been inhabitable; men and animals would have been shorter in size but heavier in weight, which would have made movement difficult. Besides, this sphere has been located at a suitable distance from the sun, which is most appropriate for the population here. If the distance had been longer, the earth would have received less of heat, the climate would have been much colder, the seasons much longer and the earth would be hardly inhabitable. On the other hand, if the distance had been shorter, the intensity of the heat along with other factors would have rendered it unfit for the kind of life man is living here.

These are a few of those harmonies and concordances due to which earth has become a place of rest for its population. A man with a little

common sense who is aware of these facts cannot imagine for a moment that these concordances have come into existence without the design of an All-Wise Creator, as a mere accident, nor can he ever conceive that a god or goddess, jinn or prophet, saint or angel, could have had any hand in the creation and bringing into operation of this grand design.

75. That is, the bodies of sweet and saline waters that exist on the earth but do not intermingle. Underground water channels mostly flow separately with sweet water and saline water side by side. Even in the middle of the bitter seas there exist at some places springs of sweet water; their current remains separate from the sea water and the sea passengers obtain their drinking water from it. (For further explanation, see *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VIII, E.N. 68 of Sūrah Al-Furqān).

76. The Arab polytheists themselves knew and acknowledged that Allah alone could avert a disaster. Therefore, the Qur'ān reminds them again and again that they implore Allah alone for help when they are confronted by a calamity. But when the calamity is removed, they start invoking others besides Allah. (For details, see E.N.'s. 29 to 41 of Al-An'ām, Yūnus: 21-22, E.N. 46 of An-Nahl, and E.N. 84 of Banī Isrā'il). And this is not only true of the Arab polytheists but of all polytheists; so much so that even the Russian atheists who are regularly campaigning against God-Worship, had to invoke God when in the Second World War they were tightly encircled by the German forces.

77. This has two meanings: (1) "He raises one generation after the other and one nation after the other"; and (2) "He gives you power and authority to rule in the earth".

78. That is, "He has made such arrangements by means of the stars that you can find your way even in the darkness of the night." This is also because of the wise planning of Allah that He has created such means by which man can determine his direction and the way to his destination in his journeys by sea and land. In the day time he is guided by different land-marks and the direction of sun-rise and sun-set, and in the dark nights by the stars. In Sūrah An-Nahl this has been counted among the bounties of Allah: "He has placed land-marks to direct people, and by the stars, too, they are guided aright." (v. 16)

79. "Allah's mercy": the rain whose coming is promptly foretold by the winds.

80. The simple fact that has been expressed in this one sentence is so vast in meaning and detail that as one considers it more and more deeply one goes on getting new and ever new proofs of Allah's existence

and His unity. In the first place, take the question of the creation itself. Man by his knowledge has not been able to discover what is life, how and wherefrom it comes. So far the admitted scientific fact is that the mere arrangement of inanimate matter by itself cannot bring about life. Though the atheists assume, unscientifically, that life comes into existence automatically when all the elements essential for its creation combine together accidentally in the right proportion, yet if the mathematical law of chance is applied to it, the possibility of its occurrence comes to nought. All attempts made so far to produce animate matter out of inanimete matter experimentally in the laboratory have met with utter failure in spite of employing every possible care. At the most what has been created is DNA, which is the basic constituent of the living cell. This is the essence of life but not life itself. Life in itself even now is a miracle which cannot be explained scientifically except by saying that it is the result of a Creator's will and command and design.

Furthermore, life does not exist in a solitary form but in a limitless variety of forms. Man has so far discovered more or less a million species of animal and two hundred thousand species of plants on the earth, which in their constitution and special characteristics are so clearly and absolutely different from one another, and have been maintaining their distinctive features since the earliest known times so consistently that no Darwin could ever give any rational explanation of this great variety of life except the existence of the creative design of One God. Not a link has so far been discovered between any two species, which might have broken up the form of the characteristics and constitution of one species and might be struggling to attain the characteristics and constitution of another species. The whole record of the fossils is without such a precedent, and among the existing animals also there is no such "eunuch" in its physical form. Any member of any species that exists is found with the distinctive features of its own species, and every story that is invented and announced from time to time about the discovery of some missing link is destroyed by the facts themselves. Therefore, the inevitable fact is that it is the All-Wise Designer, the Planner of creation, its Enforcer and its Fashioner, Who has endowed life with all its countless different forms.

This was about the beginning of the creation. Now let us consider its reproduction. The Creator has placed in the constitution and make-up of every animal and vegetable species such a wonderful mechanism, which goes on producing through its countless members an endless race exactly with its own distinctive form and nature and characteristics, and it never has happened even by mistake that in these millions and millions

of tiny sex workshops a certain workshop of a species may have turned out a specimen of a different species. The observations of modern Genetics in this connection present wonderful facts. Every plant has been so endowed with the capability of procreating its species that the new generation should possess all the distinctive characteristics of its own species and its every member should be distinguished in its special features from the members of all other species. This element for the survival of the species and its procreation is contained in a part of a cell of every plant, which can be seen with effort only through a most powerful microscope. This tiny engineer directs the whole development of the plant precisely and definitely on the way which is the way of its own distinctive species. That is why all the plants that have emerged from a grain of wheat anywhere in the world have in turn produced only wheat. In no climate and in no region has it ever happened that from the whole race of a grain of wheat even a single grain of barley might have emerged. The same is the case with animals and men. None of them has been created just for once, but on an inconceivably high scale a huge factory of reproduction is functioning everywhere, which is constantly bringing into existence, from the members of every species, countless other members of the same species. If one considers the microscopic germ of procreation which along with all the distinctive features and hereditary characteristics of its species is found in a small portion of its tiny self and then looks at the extremely delicate and complex physiological system and the subtle, intricate processes by which the procreative seed of every member of every species produces a member of the same species, one cannot conceive for a moment that such a fine and subtle system could come into being by itself, and then keep on functioning by itself in millions and millions of the members of different species. This thing stands in need of an All-Wise Designer not only for its beginning but for its proper and perpetual functioning also it needs an Administrator Who is at once Wise and Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent, Who is ever watching and guiding the work of these workshops.

These facts destroy the very basis of an atheist's denial of God as also of a polytheist's creed of polytheism. A foolish person only can think that an angel or a jinn or a prophet or a saint has any hand in this work of God, but no unbiased person possessed of a little common sense can ever say that this huge workshop of production and reproduction with all its underlying wisdom and order started working just accidentally and has since been working so automatically.

81. The question of the provision of sustenance also is not so simple as a person may feel it to be from a cursory study of this brief sentence.

There exist on this earth millions of animal and vegetable species, each comprising billions of members having different food requirements. The Creator has arranged the means of sustenance for each species in such abundance and so within easy reach that members of no species ever go without food. Then the agencies of the earth and sky which combine and work together in this system are varied and countless. Unless there is the right kind of coordination and harmony between the heat, light, air, water and the diverse substances of the earth, not a single particle of food can be produced.

Can anyone conceive that this wise system could come about just accidentally without the intelligent planning and design of an All-Wise Creator? And can anybody in his senses imagine that in this system there could be any hand of a jinn or an angel or the spirit of a pious man?

82. That is, "You should either bring a proof to show that someone else is an associate of Allah in these works, or, if that is not possible, you should at least explain by an argument why you should worship and serve any other god beside Allah, when One Allah alone has done, and is doing, all these works"

83. In the preceding verses, arguments have been given to prove that Allah is the One and only Deity when considered from the viewpoint of creation, design and provision of the means of sustenance. Now in this verse it is being told that from the viewpoint of knowledge too, which is an important attribute of Godhead, Allah is Unique and without an associate. Whatever creations are there in the heavens and the earth, whether angels or jinns, prophets and saints, or other men and other creatures, they have only limited knowledge. Something is hidden from all of them. The All-Knowing One is only Allah, from Whom nothing whatever of this universe is hidden, and Who knows every thing of the past and the present and the future.

The word *ghaib* means something hidden and covered. As a term it implies everything which is unknown, and beyond one's sphere of knowledge and information. There are many things in the world which individually are known to some human beings and unknown to others. And there are many others which taken as a whole have never been known to any of mankind, nor are known at present, nor will be known in the future. The same is the case with the jinns and the angels and other kinds of creation: certain things are known to some of them and hidden from others, and many things hidden from all of them and known to none. All kinds of hidden things are only known to One Being, the All-Knowing Allah. For Him nothing is unknown: everything is known and evident.

In order to bring out this reality the method of the question as employed above with regard to creation, design and sustenance of the universe has not been adopted here. The reason is that the manifestations of those attributes are clear and evident which everyone sees, and which even the pagans and polytheists acknowledged, and do even today, that they are the works of Allah. So, the argument adopted above was this: When all these works, as you admit, are being done by Allah, and no one else is His partner in these, why have you then made others His associates in Divinity, and in His worship? However, the attribute of knowledge has no perceptible manifestation which may be referred to and pointed out. It can be comprehended only by thought and reflection. Therefore, it has been put forward as an assertion instead of a question. Now it is for every intelligent person to think and consider for himself whether it is reasonable to believe that there should be any other than Allah, who is all-knowing, i.e. who knows all those conditions and things and realities which existed in the universe in the past, or exist now, or will exist in the future. And if there is none other who is all-knowing, and cannot be, then is it reasonable to believe that any of those who are not aware fully of the realities and conditions and circumstances can become the answerer of the people's prayers, fulfiller of their needs and remover of their hardships?

There is a subtle relationship between Divinity and the knowledge of the unseen and hidden. Since the earliest times in whatever being has man imagined the presence of an attribute of Godhead, he has taken it for granted that it knows everything and nothing is hidden from it. In other words, it is self-evident for man to believe that making or marring the destinies, answering the prayers, fulfilling the needs and helping everyone in need of help, can be the work of the being who knows everything and from whom nothing is hidden. That is why whomever man has regarded as possessor of the powers and authority of Godhead he has necessarily regarded him as the knower of all hidden things as well. For his intellect testifies rightly that knowledge and authority are inter-dependent. Now if it is a fact that none but God is the Creator and the Designer and the Answerer of the prayers and the Providence, as has been proved in the foregoing verses, then it is also a self-evident reality that none but God is the Knower of the hidden things. After all, who in his senses could imagine that an angel or a jinn or a prophet or a saint or any other creature would be knowing where and what kinds of animals existed in the oceans and in the atmosphere and under the layers of the earth and upon its surface? And what is the correct number of the planets in the heavens? And what kinds of creatures exist in each of them? And where is each one of these creatures living and

what are its requirements? All this should necessarily be known to Allah, because He has created them and He alone has to watch over their conditions and control their affairs and arrange for their sustenance. But how can some one else with his limited self have this vast and all-embracing knowledge and what has he to do with the functions of creation and sustenance that he should know these things?

Then this quality is also not divisible in the sense that a person, for instance, may be the knower of everything on the earth, or the knower of everything concerning human beings only, on the earth. It is in the same way indivisible as are God's Creativity and His Providence and His Self-Subsistence indivisible. After all, how can it be possible for one to know all the affairs and all the conditions and states of all human beings who have been born in the world since the beginning of creation, and will be born till Resurrection, from the time their mothers conceived them till the time they will breathe their last? And how and why will he know all this? Is he the creator of these countless multitudes? Did he create their seed in their fathers' sperm-drop? Did he mould and shape them in their mother's womb? Did he arrange for their normal birth? Did he make the destiny of each one of them? Is he responsible for taking decisions with regard to their life and death, their health and ill-health, their prosperity and adversity, and their rise and fall in the world? And since when did he become responsible for it? Since before his own birth or since after it? And how can these responsibilities remain confined only to human beings? This is only a part of the universal administration of the heavens and the earth. The Being Who is controlling the whole universe is the Being Who alone can be responsible for the creation and death of men, for restricting and extending their provisions and for making and marring their destinies.

That is why it is a fundamental article of Islam that none other than Allah is the Knower of the hidden and unseen things. Allah may disclose whatever of His information He wills to whomsoever of His servants He pleases and bless him with the knowledge of one or more of the hidden things as a whole. Being the Knower of all hidden and unseen things is the attribute only of Allah, Who is the Lord of all creation. "He alone has the keys of the 'unseen' of which none has the knowledge but He." (Al-An'ām : 59) "Allah alone has the knowledge of the Hour: He alone sends down the rain and He alone knows what is (taking shape) in the wombs of the mothers. No living being knows what he will earn the next day, nor does anybody know in what land he will die." (Luqmān: 34) "He knows what is before the people and also what is hidden from them; and they cannot compre-

hend anything of His knowledge save whatever He Himself may please to reveal." (Al-Baqarah: 255).

The Qur'ān does not rest content with this general and absolute negation of the knowledge of the hidden and unseen for the different forms of creation, but about the Prophets in particular, and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) himself it clearly says that they do not possess the knowledge of the hidden and unseen, and that they were given only that much knowledge of the hidden by Allah as was necessary to enable them to carry out the duties of Prophethood. Sūrah Al-An'ām: 50, Al-A'rāf: 187, At-Taubah: 101, Hūd: 31, Al-Aḥzāb: 63, Al-Aḥqāf: 9, At-Taḥrīm: 3 and Al-Jinn: 26-28 do not leave any room for doubt in this regard.

All these elucidations of the Qur'ān support and explain the verse under discussion after which there remains no doubt that looking upon another than Allah as the knower of the hidden and unseen and believing that someone else also possesses the knowledge of all the past and future events, is an absolutely un-Islamic belief. Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have cited this saying of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah through authentic reporters: "Whoever claimed that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) knew what was going to happen the next day, accused Allah of lying, for Allah says: O Prophet, say, 'None in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the hidden and unseen but Allah'." Ibn al-Mundhir has reported this on the authority of 'Ikrimāh, the well-known pupil of Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās: "A person asked the Holy Prophet: O Muḥammad, when will Resurrection be? And our territory is suffering from famine: when will it rain? And my wife is pregnant: what will she deliver, a boy or a girl? And I know what I have earned today; but what shall I earn tomorrow? And I know where I was born, but where shall I die?" In reply, the Holy Prophet recited verse 34 of Sūrah Luqmān as cited above. Then the well-known Tradition as reported in Bukhārī and Muslim and other works of *Ḥadīth* also supports the same. According to it one of the questions asked by Angel Gabriel from the Holy Prophet when he sat among the Companions in human shape before him, was: "When will Resurrection be?" The Holy Prophet replied: "The one being questioned knows no better than the one questioning." Then added, "This is one of those five things whose knowledge is possessed by none but Allah," and then he recited the above-cited verse of Sūrah Luqmān.

84. That is, "Those others about whom it is thought that they possess the knowledge of the hidden and, therefore, are regarded as

partners in Divinity, are themselves unaware of their future. They do not know when will Resurrection be when Allah will raise them up again."

85. After warning the people about their basic errors with regard to Divinity, it is being said that the reason why these people are involved in these errors is not that they have reached this conclusion after serious thought and deliberation that there exist other beings also who are Allah's associates in His Divinity, but the actual reason is that they have never considered this matter seriously. As they are unaware of the Hereafter, or are in doubt about it, or are blind to it, their heedlessness of the Hereafter has developed in them an utterly irresponsible attitude. They are not at all serious about the universe and the real problems of their own lives. They do not bother to know what reality is and whether their philosophy of life accords with that reality or not. For, according to them, in the end the polytheist and the atheist, the monotheist and the agnostic, all will become one with the dust after death, and nothing will bear any fruit.

The theme of the Hereafter is contained in this sentence of the preceding verse: "They do not know when they will be raised back to life." In that sentence it was said that those who are made deities—the angels, jinns, prophets, saints, etc., do not themselves know when will Resurrection be. Here three things have been said about the common polytheists and the atheists: (1) They do not at all know whether there will be any Hereafter or not; (2) this lack of information on their part is not due to the reason that they were never informed of this, but because they did not believe in the information given to them and doubted its authenticity; and (3) they never bothered to consider with due thought and seriousness the arguments that were advanced about the coming of the Hereafter, but they preferred to remain blind to it.

86. This brief sentence contains two strong arguments for the Hereafter as well as admonition:

Firstly, those communities who rejected the Hereafter could not help becoming criminals: they lived irresponsibly; they committed cruelties and all kinds of sin; and ultimately their moral depravity led them to utter ruin. This continuous experience of human history which is testified by the doomed communities all over the world, clearly shows that belief and unbelief in the Hereafter has a deep relationship with the soundness or the unsoundness of human behaviour. Belief in it generates sound behaviour and denial of it unsound behaviour. This is a clear proof of the fact that belief in it is in accordance with the reality; that is

[Contd on p. 56

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا
 الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي
 تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾
 وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي
 السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَفُضُّ عَلَىٰ بَنِي
 إِسْرَائِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَهْدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾
 إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٠٨﴾ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ
 عَلَىٰ الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ ﴿١٠٩﴾ إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تَسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا
 وَلُوا مُدِيرِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَدَىٰ الْعُمَىٰ عَنِ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ إِنْ تَسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ
 يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً
 مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ
 مِّنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ وَ
 قَالَ أَكذَّبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمَا ذَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَقَعَ
 الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ
 لَيْسَكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ
 يُنْفَخُ فِي السُّورِ فَفَرَعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ
 اللَّهُ ۗ وَكُلٌّ أَتَوْهُ دُخْرِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدًا ۖ وَهِيَ تَمْرٌ مَّر
 السَّحَابِ ۖ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۖ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ مَنْ
 جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۖ وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَمَنْ

O Prophet, do not grieve for them nor feel distressed at their machinations.⁸⁷—They say, “When will this threat be carried out if you are truthful?”⁸⁸ Say, “No wonder that a part of the torment you wish to be hastened, may well have approached you.”⁸⁹ The fact is that your Lord is highly Gracious to the people, but most of them are not grateful.⁹⁰ No doubt your Lord knows fully well what they keep hidden in their breasts and what they reveal.⁹¹ There is no secret thing in the heavens and the earth, which is not recorded in a clear Book.⁹² 70-75

The fact is that this Qur’ān tells the children of Israel the reality of most of those things in which they differ;⁹³ and this is a Guidance and a Mercy for the believers.⁹⁴ (Likewise) your Lord will surely judge between these people⁹⁵ as well by His Command, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.⁹⁶ Therefore, O Prophet, put your trust in Allah: you are certainly on the manifest Truth. You cannot make the dead to hear you,⁹⁷ nor can convey your call to the deaf, who have turned their backs and are running away from you,⁹⁸ nor can guide the blind against their errors.⁹⁹ You can only make those people to listen to you, who believe in Our Revelations and then submit (to Us) completely. 76-81

And when the time of the fulfilment of Our Decree approaches them,¹⁰⁰ We shall bring forth a beast for them from the earth, which will speak to them (about this) that the people did not believe in Our Revelations.¹⁰¹ And imagine the Day when We shall gather together from every community a host of those people who used to treat Our Revelations as false; then they will be arranged (according to their classification and merit) until when all of them will have arrived, (their Lord) will ask them, “Did you treat My Revelations as false whereas you did not comprehend them by knowledge?¹⁰² If not this, what else were you doing?”¹⁰³ And the threat of the torment will be carried out on them in consequence of their wicked deeds; 82-86

then they will not be able to utter a word. Did they not perceive that We had ordained the night for them to have rest in it, and made the day bright?¹⁰⁴ Surely in this there were many Signs for those who believed.¹⁰⁵

87-90

And on the Day when the Trumpet will be blown, all those who are in the heavens and the earth, shall be struck with terror¹⁰⁶—except those whom Allah shall be pleased to protect.—And all shall present themselves before Him in submission. Today, you see the mountains and think that they are firmly set, but on that Day they will be flying about like the clouds; this will be a manifestation of the powers of Allah, Who has ordered everything with wisdom. He is fully aware of what you do.¹⁰⁷ He who will bring good deeds, will have a reward better than that,¹⁰⁸ and such people shall be secure from the terror of that Day.¹⁰⁹ And the one who will come with evil deeds, all such people shall be flung upon their faces into the Fire. Can you be rewarded except in accordance with your deeds?^{109(a)}

Contd. from p. 53]

why belief helps life to follow the right path. And rejection of it is against the reality; that is why rejection leads life into crooked alleys.

Secondly, the destruction of the communities, which became criminals, one after the other, in the long experience of history is a clear pointer to the fact that this universe is not being ruled by the deaf and blind and senseless forces, but this is a wise system which is functioning according to the unalterable law of retribution, which is dealing with the human communities only on moral grounds, in which no community is given long enough rope to commit whatever evil it likes and continue to enjoy life and commit injustices after it has once risen to power and prosperity. But when a wicked community happens to reach a certain stage, a mighty hand topples it from power and hurls it into the abyss of ignominy. Anyone who realizes this fact can have no doubt that the same law of retribution calls for the establishment of a new world after this world, where all individuals and nations and the whole mankind collectively should be rewarded and punished for their deeds. For the requirements of justice cannot be fulfilled only by the destruction of a wicked nation; this does not in any way redress the grievances of the

oppressed people; this does not punish those who had enjoyed life and left the world before the coming down of the scourge; this does not also take to task those wicked people who went on leaving behind them legacies of immoralities and deviations for the coming generations. The torment that visited the nation only put a stop to the further tyrannies of its last generation. The court has not yet started working, to punish every wicked person for the evil done, to compensate every oppressed person for the losses incurred, and to reward all those who stood by the right against the onslaught of evil, endeavoured to reform things and faced persecutions in this way throughout their lives. All this should necessarily happen at some time. For the continuous operation in the world of the law of retribution clearly points to the temperament and technique of the ruling government of the universe that it judges human deeds by moral standards and punishes and rewards them accordingly.

Besides these two arguments, the aspect of admonition in this verse is this: "Learn lessons from the fate of the guilty people of the past, and do not persist in the foolish belief of the denial of the Hereafter, which, in fact, was responsible for making them criminals."

87. That is, "You have done full justice to your mission of preaching. Now if they do not listen to you, and wish to persist in their folly and deserve the Divine torment, you should not consume yourself by being distressed and grieved at their condition. Then, why should you feel vexed at their mean machinations that they are devising in order to fight the truth and to frustrate your movement of reform? You have Allah's power at your back. If they do not listen to you, they will only be harming themselves, not you."

88. The same threat which is implied in the preceding verse. What they meant was this: "When will the scourge with which you threaten us overtake us? Why are we not being punished when we have not only rejected you but have also done whatever we could to frustrate your mission?"

89. This is a royal way of saying a thing. When words like "perhaps", "no wonder", etc. occur in the Divine discourse, they do not contain any sense of doubt, but express Allah's Independence and Self-Sufficiency. Allah's power is so great that His willing a thing and its happening is one and the same thing. It is inconceivable that He should will a thing and it should not happen. Therefore, when He says, "No wonder it may well be so", it means, "It will certainly be so if you do not mend your ways."

90. That is, "It is Allah's mercy that He does not seize the culprit immediately after his commission of a crime but gives him respite to

reform himself. But most people are not grateful for this, and do not utilize the period of respite for their reformation. On the contrary, when they see that they have not been taken to task immediately, they form the idea that there is none to call them to account. Therefore, they are free to do whatever they like and they should not listen to any word of admonition."

91. That is, "He is not only aware of their open misdeeds but is also fully aware of the malice and spite which they are concealing in their hearts and the evil plots which they are making secretly. Therefore, when the time comes to call them to account, they will be taken to task for everything done and thought."

92. Here by "Book" is not meant the Qur'ān, but the Divine Record in which everything has been registered.

93. This sentence is connected with the foregoing theme as well as with what follows. In the first case, it means that it is a manifestation of the knowledge of the All-Knowing God that He is explaining through a gentile (non-Jew) in this Qur'ān the reality of those events which are a part of the Israelite history, and which are being disputed by the learned men of the Israelites themselves. (The examples of this have been given in the early part of this Sūrah as explained in our Notes). In the second case, it means that just as Allah has decided those disputes, so He will decide this dispute also which is going on between the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) and his opponents as to who is following the truth and who the falsehood. So, a few years after the revelation of these verses the Decision came before the whole world. In the same land of Arabia and in the same clan of the Quraish there was not left a single person who was not convinced that it was Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) who was following the Truth and not Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab. Even the children of these people admitted that their fathers were in the wrong.

94. That is, "It is Mercy and Guidance for those who accept the message of the Qur'ān and believe in what it presents. Such people will be saved from the errors in which their own people are involved. They will find the right way of life by means of the Qur'ān and they will be blessed with such favours by Allah, which the disbelievers among the Quraish cannot even imagine today." This shower of Allah's mercy was also witnessed by the world after a few years. The same people who were living unknown lives in a corner of the Arabian desert and could at the most become successful raiders in the state of unbelief, suddenly emerged after their belief in the Qur'ān as the guides of the world, leaders of the nations, makers of human civilization and rulers over a vast part of the world.

95. "Between these people": Between the disbelievers of the Quraish and the believers.

96. That is, "Neither can any power withhold His judgement from being enforced, nor is there any chance of an error in His judgement."

97. "The dead": the ones whose consciences are dead and whose stubbornness, obstinacy and love of the usage and custom have deprived them of the sense of discrimination between the Truth and falsehood.

98. That is, "Who not only close their ears against what you say, but slink away from the place where they fear they might hear what you say."

99. That is, "It is none of your job to pull them forcibly to the right way and drag them along with you. You can only tell them by the word of mouth and by your example that this is the right way and the way they are following is the wrong way. But how can you guide the one who has closed his eyes and is not at all inclined to see anything?"

100. That is, "...when Resurrection which they are being promised will approach."

101. According to Ibn 'Umar, this will happen when there remains no one in the world to command the people to do good and forbid them to do evil. Ibn Mardūyah has reported a *Hadīth* on the authority of Abū Sa'īd Khudrī according to which the latter heard the same thing from the Holy Prophet himself. This shows that when man gives up the duty of exhorting others to do good and forbidding them to do evil, Allah will bring forth a beast to serve as the final warning just before Resurrection. This, however, is not clear whether it will be just one beast, or a particular species of beasts, who will spread all over the earth. The words *dāabbat-an-min-al-ard* might contain both the meanings. In any case, what it will say will be this: "The people did not believe Allah's Revelations in which Resurrection was foretold. Now the same Resurrection is about to come; let everyone know that what Allah said was true". The sentence, "The people did not believe in Our Revelations", is either a part of the beast's own speech, or Allah's narration of its words. If these are its own words, the word "Our" will be understood in the style of an official who speaks on behalf of his government and not on his personal behalf. In the second case, since Allah is narrating the beast's words, He has used "Our Revelations" in the normal sense.

As to the time and occasion of the appearance of this beast, the Holy Prophet has said: "The sun will rise in the west and the beast will suddenly appear in the open daylight. Whichever of these signs appears first, it will be closely followed by the other." (Muslim) In the

other traditions related in Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc. the Holy Prophet foretold that the signs of Resurrection—emergence of the Anti-Christ (*Dajjal*), appearance of the beast, smoke and the rising of the sun in the west—will appear one after the other.

As for the nature, general appearance, place of appearance and other details about the beast, contradictory traditions have been reported, which only cause confusion and are not relevant to the object for which this thing has been mentioned in the Qur'ān.

As regards the beast's speaking to human beings in a human language, this will be a manifestation of the power of Allah, Who can give the power of speech to anything He pleases. He will give this power only to a beast before the event of Resurrection, but when Resurrection will have taken place, each limb of man—his ears, his eyes, even his skin—will speak out and give evidence in the Court of Allah, as has been clearly stated in Hā Mīm As-Sajdah : 20-21 : "Then, when all will have reached there, their ears and their eyes and their very skins will bear witness against them concerning what they had been doing in the world. They will say to their skins, 'Why have you borne witness against us?' They will reply, 'The same God Who has given speech to everything has given us speech'."

102. That is, "You did not deny My Revelations on the basis of some scientific investigation, which might have proved them to be false, but you denied them without any sound reason."

103. That is, "If it is not so, can you then prove that you treated them as false only after a thorough scientific investigation through which you came to know that the reality was not that which was being presented in these verses?"

104. That is, "Two out of the countless signs were such which they were observing at all times, whose benefits they were enjoying every moment, and which were not hidden even from a blind or deaf or dumb person. While they benefited by the rest at night and the opportunities afforded by the day, why did they not think that it is a system devised by an All-Wise Being, Who has established the relationship between the sun and the earth precisely to meet their requirements and needs? This cannot be a mere accident, for it clearly manifests purposefulness, wisdom and planning, which cannot be the characteristic of the blind forces of nature, nor the work of many gods. It can only be a system established by the One Creator and Master and Disposer, Who is ruling over the earth, the moon, the sun and all other planets. From the observation of this single phenomenon they could judge that the alternation of the day and night testified to the truth that We have conveyed through Our Messenger and Our Book."

105. That is, "It was not something incomprehensible either. There were among their own relatives, their own clan and their own brotherhood people like themselves, who had seen the same very Signs and believed that the creed of God-worship and *Tauhid* towards which the Prophet was inviting them was precisely in accordance with the truth and reality."

106. For a detailed discussion of the blowing of the Trumpet, see E.N. 47 of Al-An'ām, E.N. 57 of Ibrāhīm, E.N. 78 of Ṭā Hā, E.N. 1 of Al-Hajj, E.N.'s. 46, 47 of Yā S n and E.N. 79 of Az-Zumar.

107. That is, "From such God you should not expect that after giving you the powers of intellect and discrimination and control over things, He will remain unaware of your deeds and actions and will not see how you have been using the delegated authority in the earth."

108. The reward will be better in two ways : (1) It will be higher than what a person will actually deserve for his good deeds; and (2) it will be everlasting and for ever though the good act was temporary and its influence confined to a limited period only.

109. That is, "Though the terrors of Resurrection will stun and confound the disbelievers, the believers will remain safe and secure from them, for everything in the Hereafter will be according to their expectations. They had already known from the messages brought by the Messengers of Allah that Resurrection will take place, and a new World will be established when everyone will be called to account for his deeds. Therefore, they will neither be bewildered nor alarmed, which will be the case with those who had denied this Day and remained heedless of it, till their last breath in the world. They will also be satisfied because they had worked for this Day and had brought necessary provisions from the world for their success here. Therefore, they will not be stupefied and confounded as will be those who had invested all their energies and capabilities in their struggle for achieving worldly successes only, and had never thought that there would be life hereafter also for which they should make some provision. Contrary to them, the believers will be satisfied that the Day for the sake of which they had given up the unlawful benefits and pleasures of life and had undergone hardships and toil, had at last come, and they will not be deprived of the rewards of their works."

109a. At several places in the Qur'ān it has been stated clearly that an evil will be punished in the Hereafter only to the extent of the evil committed, but a good act will be rewarded much more generously by Allah than what the doer will actually deserve for it. For more examples of this, see Sūrah Yūnus: 26-27, Al-Qa'as: 84, Al-'Ankabūt: 7, Sabā' : 37-38, Al-Mu'min: 40.

جَاءَ بِالتَّيْتَةِ فَكَبَّتْ وَجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هَلْ تَجْزُونَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ
 إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَأُمِرْتُ
 أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۗ وَأَنْ أَتْلُوا الْقُرْآنَ ۗ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي
 لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ۗ وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سِيرِكُمْ
 آيَتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا ۗ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۗ

91-93

(O Muhammad, say to them:) "What I have been commanded is that I should worship the Lord of this City, Who has made it sacred, and Who is the Owner of everything.¹¹⁰ I have been commanded to live as a Muslim and to recite the Qur'an." Now whosoever follows the guidance, will follow it for his own good, and to him who goes astray, say, "I am only a warner." Say to them, "Praise is only for Allah; very soon He will show you His Signs, which you shall recognize; and your Lord is not unaware of what you do."

110. As this Sūrah was sent down at a stage when the message of Islam was confined to Makkah and its addressees were the people of that City only, it was said, "I have been commanded that I should worship the Lord of this City." And the characteristic of the Lord was stated to be that He had made that City sacred. This was meant to warn the disbelievers of Makkah, as if to say, "You may if you so like prove thankless to that God Who has done you the great favour of making this City of yours a haven of peace in the strife-ridden land of Arabia, and Who by His grace has made it the centre of spiritual affiliation for the whole of Arabia, but I have been commanded to be grateful to Him and bow down before Him. None of your deities had the power to make this City a sanctuary and make the quarrelsome and plundering tribes of Arabia have respect for it. I cannot abandon my real Benefactor and bow down before those who have done me no favour at all."

XXVIII

AL-QASAS الْقَصَص

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XXVIII

AL-QAṢAṢ الْقَصَص

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from verse 25 in which the word Al-Qaṣaṣ occurs. Lexically, *qaṣaṣ* means to relate events in their proper sequence. Thus, from the viewpoint of the meaning too, this word can be a suitable title for this Sūrah, for in it the detailed story of the Prophet Moses has been related.

Period of Revelation

As already mentioned in the Introduction to Sūrah An-Naml, according to Ibn ‘Abbās and Jābir bin Zaid, Sūrahs Ash-Shu‘arāā’, An-Naml and Al-Qaṣaṣ were sent down one after the other. The language, the style and the theme also show that the period of the revelation of these three Sūrahs is nearly the same. Another reason for their close resemblance is that the different parts of the Prophet Moses’ story as mentioned in these Sūrahs together make up a complete story. In Sūrah Ash-Shu‘arāā’, excusing himself for not accepting the office of Prophethood, the Prophet Moses submits, “The people of Pharaoh have the charge of a crime against me; therefore, I fear that they will put me to death.” Then, when he goes before Pharaoh, the latter says, “Did we not bring you up as a child in our house? You

lived quite a few years of your life among us, and then you did what you did." Nothing more of this has been mentioned there, but in this Sūrah the other details have been supplied. Similarly, in Sūrah An-Naml the story starts abruptly from the time when the Prophet Moses was journeying with his family and suddenly saw a fire at a distance. In that Sūrah nothing has been said about the nature of his journey, or the place he was coming from, or his destination, but this Sūrah supplies all the necessary details. Thus, the three Sūrahs read together complete the story of the Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Theme and Topics

The main theme is to remove the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and to invalidate the excuses which were being offered for not believing in him.

For this purpose, first the story of the Prophet Moses has been related, which, by analogy with the period of revelation, impresses the following points in the listener's mind automatically:

First, Allah provides the means and motives of whatever He wills to do, in imperceptible ways. Thus, Allah so arranged things that the child through whom Pharaoh had to be removed from power, was bred and brought up in his own house, and he could not know whom he was fostering. Who can then fight God and frustrate Him by his machinations?

Secondly, Prophethood is not granted to a person amid festivities by issuing a proclamation from the earth and heavens. You wonder how Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) has been blessed with Prophethood unexpectedly, all of a sudden, but Moses whom you yourselves acknowledge as a Prophet (v. 48) had also become a Prophet unexpectedly, while on a journey, and nobody had

known what event had occurred in the desolation at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Even Moses himself did not know a moment before what he was going to be blessed with. He, in fact, had gone to bring a piece of the fire but had returned with the gift of Prophethood.

Thirdly, the person from whom Allah wants to take some service comes out without any army and armour and without an apparent helper or force at his back, yet he puts to rout much stronger and better equipped opponents. The contrast that existed between the strengths of Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh was much more prominent and glaring than that which existed between Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and the Quraish; yet the world knows who had come out victorious in the end and who had been routed.

Fourthly, you refer to Moses again and again and say, "Why has Muḥammad not been given the same which was given to Moses?—i.e. miracles of the staff, the shining hand, etc.—as if to suggest that you would readily believe only if you were shown the kind of the miracles that were shown by Moses to Pharaoh. But do you know what sort of response was made by those who were shown those miracles? They had not believed even after seeing the miracles, and had only said, "This is magic", for they were involved in stubbornness and hostility to the Truth. The same malady afflicts you today. Will you believe only when you are shown the same kind of miracles? Then, do you know what fate the disbelievers had met even after seeing the miracles? They were annihilated by Allah. Do you now wish to meet the same doom by asking for the miracles in your obstinacy?

These were the things which were automatically impressed in the mind of every listener who heard this story in the pagan environment of Makkah, for a similar conflict was going on at that time between the Holy Prophet and disbelievers of Makkah as had already taken place between the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh before. This was the

background against which the story of the Prophet Moses was narrated so that a perfect analogy was established automatically in every detail between the conditions prevailing then in Makkah and those existing in the time of the Prophet Moses. Then, from verse 43 onward the discourse turns to the real theme.

In the first place, the narration of a two thousand year old historical event by the Holy Prophet with such accuracy and detail, is presented as a proof of his Prophethood although he was un-lettered and the people of his city and clan knew full well that he had no access to any source of such information as they could point out.

Then his appointment as a Prophet is put forward as Allah's mercy to them, for they were heedless and Allah had made this arrangement for their guidance. Then their oft-repeated objection, "Why has not this Prophet brought the miracles which Moses had brought?" has been answered. It is said to them, "How can you be justified in demanding miracles from this Prophet when you did not believe in Moses either, who, as you yourselves acknowledge, had brought miracles from God? You can still see the truth only if you do not serve your lusts and whims. But if you remained afflicted with this malady, you would never see it even though you were shown any kind of miracles."

Then the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned and put to shame for an event that occurred in those very days. Some Christians had come to Makkah and embraced Islam when they heard the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet. Instead of learning any lesson from this the Makkans were so upset at this that their leader, Abū Jahl, disgraced those people publicly.

In conclusion, the excuse that the disbelievers put forward for not believing in the Holy Prophet has been dealt with. What they feared was this: "If we give up the polytheistic creed of the Arabs and accept the doctrine of *Tauhīd* instead, this will put an end to our supremacy in the religious, political and economic fields, which, in turn,

will destroy our position of the most influential tribe of Arabia and we shall be left with no refuge anywhere in the land." As this was the real motive of the chiefs of the Quraish for their antagonism towards the Truth, and their doubts and objections were only the pretences, which they invented to deceive the common people, Allah has dealt with these fully till the end of the Sūrah, considered each aspect of these in a wise manner and offered the remedy for their basic ailment due to which those people judged the Truth and falsehood only from the viewpoint of their worldly interests.



طَسَّمَكَ تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْبَيِّنَاتِ لِنَتْلُو عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَبَأِ مُوسَى وَفِرْعَوْنَ
 بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيْعًا
 يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ وَيَسْتَحْيِ نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ
 الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ
 آيَةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَنَمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ
 هَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ
 أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۗ إِنَّا
 رَأَوْنَاهُ الْبَيْتَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ
 عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا ۗ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِبِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقَالَتِ
 امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتْ عَيْنِي لِي وَلَكَ ۗ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ ۗ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ
 وَلَدًا ۗ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَرِحًا ۗ إِنَّ كَادَتْ لِتُبَدِّلَ
 بِهِ نَوْلًا ۗ أَنْ رَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ

XXVIII

AL-QASAS الْقَصَص

Verses : 88

Revealed at Makkah

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

Tā. Sīn. Mīm. These are the verses of the lucid Book. 1-3
We narrate to you accurately some of the history of Moses and Pharaoh¹ for the benefit of those who believe.²

The fact is that Pharaoh adopted an attitude of rebellion in the land³ and divided its dwellers into groups,⁴ one of which he debased, putting their sons to death, and letting their daughters live:⁵ indeed he was one of the mischief-makers. And it was Our will to show favour to those who had been oppressed in the land to make them leaders and to make them the heirs; to give them power in the land and to show Pharaoh and Hāmān⁶ and their hosts, at their hands, the same which they feared. 4-6

We⁷ inspired the mother of Moses, saying, "Suckle him, and when you see any danger for him, cast him into the river, and fear not nor grieve, for We shall restore him to you and shall include him among the Messengers."¹⁰ Consequently, Pharaoh's household picked him up (from the river) so that he may become their enemy and cause of grief for them.¹¹ Really, Pharaoh and Hāmān and their hosts were misguided (in their scheming). Pharaoh's wife said (to him), "He is a comfort of the eyes for me and for you! Do not kill him: maybe that he proves useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son."¹² And they were unaware (of the ultimate result). 7-9

1. For comparison, see Al-Baqarah: 47-59, Al-A'rāf: 100-141, Yūnus: 75-92, Hūd: 96-109, Banī Isrā'īl: 101-111, Maryam: 51-53. Tā Hā: 1-89, Al-Mu'minūn: 45-49, Ash-Shu'arāā: 10-68, An-Naml:

7-14, Al-'Ankabūt : 39-40, Al-Mu'min : 23-50, Az-Zukhruf : 46-56, Ad-Dukhān : 17-33, Adh-Dhāriyāt : 38-40, An-Nāziyāt : 15-26.

2. That is, "For the benefit of those who are not obstinate and stubborn, for it would be useless to address those who are not at all inclined to listen to you."

3. The words '*alā fil-ard*' in the Text are comprehensive and mean that he adopted a rebellious attitude in the land, assumed independence and godhead and superiority instead of behaving like a servant and a subordinate, and started oppressing his subjects like a tyrannical and haughty ruler.

4. That is, "He did not rule his subjects with an even hand giving equal rights to all of them, but he had adopted the polity of dividing them into groups. He bestowed privileges and preferential rights on some to be made the ruling class and reduced others to serfs to be oppressed and exploited."

Here, nobody should have the doubt that an Islamic government also discriminates between its Muslim and *dhimmi* subjects, and does not allow them equal rights and privileges in every way. This doubt is misplaced because this distinction, contrary to Pharaonic discrimination, is not based on any distinction owing to race, colour, language or class, but on the distinction of ideology and way of life. In the Islamic system there is absolutely no difference between the legal rights of the Muslims and the *dhimmis*. The only difference is in their political rights, for the simple reason that in an ideological state the ruling class can only be the one which believes in its basic ideology. Every person who accepts this ideology can enter that class, and anyone who rejects it quits it. Thus, there can be no element of resemblance between this discrimination and the Pharaonic discrimination according to which no member of the oppressed race can ever enter the ruling class, under which the people of the oppressed race do not even enjoy the basic human rights, not to speak of their political and economic rights; so much so that they are even deprived of their right to live and survive, and denied security of any right whatever, all special privileges and benefits and high offices and good things of life being reserved for the ruling class and for every such person who happens to have been born in it.

5. The Bible elucidates this as follows:

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them task masters

to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Ra'amses. . . . And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. . . . And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live." (Exod. 1: 8-16).

This shows that after the passing away of the Prophet Joseph a nationalist revolution took place in Egypt, and when the Copts regained power the new nationalist government employed every means to subdue the Israelites. They did not only humiliate and disgrace them and took mean services from them, but, over and above this, they adopted the policy of reducing their population, by killing their sons and allowing their daughters to live so that their women should gradually pass into the Copts' hands and produce the Coptic instead of the Israelite race. The Talmud adds that this revolution had taken place a little over a hundred years after the death of the Prophet Joseph. According to it, the new government, in the first instance, deprived the Israelites of their fertile lands and houses and possessions, and then removed them from the government jobs and offices. Even after this whenever the Coptic rulers felt that the Israelites and their Egyptian co-religionists were becoming formidable they would disgrace them and employ them in rigorous jobs on little or no wages at all. This is the explanation of the Qur'ānic verse: "He debased a section of the Egyptian population", and of verse 49 of Al-Baqarah: "They had inflicted a dreadful torment on you."

However, neither the Bible nor the Qur'ān mentions that the Pharaoh was told by an astrologer that a boy would be born among the Israelites, who would become a cause of his deposition from power and to meet this danger he had issued orders to kill the male children born in the Israelite homes, or that Pharaoh himself had seen a dreadful dream and the explanation given was that a son would be born among the Israelites, who would cause his downfall. Our commentators have taken this legend from the Talmud and other Israelite traditions. (See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, under "Moses", and *The Talmud Selections*, pp. 123-24).

6. That is, "Make them leaders and guides of the people in the world."

7. That is, "Bestow on them inheritance of the land so that they should be rulers over it."

8. The Western orientalists have been very critical of this. They say that Hāmān was a courtier of the Persian King Xerxes, who reigned hundreds of years after the Prophet Moses, from 486 to 465 B.C., but the Qur'ān has made him a minister of Pharaoh in Egypt. This is nothing but an instance of sheer prejudice. After all, what historical evidence have these orientalists got to prove that there never lived any other person called Hāmān before Xerxes' courtier Hāmān? If an orientalist has been able to discover, through authentic means, a complete list of all the ministers and chiefs and courtiers of the Pharaoh under discussion which does not contain the name of Hāmān he should make it public, or publish a photostat of it, because there could be no better or more effective instrument than this of the refutation of the Qur'ān.

9. That a son was born in the same period to an Israelite parents who was later known by the name of Moses to the world, has been omitted. According to the Bible and the Talmud, the family descended from Levi, a son of the Prophet Jacob, and the name of the Prophet Moses' father was Amram, which has been pronounced as 'Imrān by the Qur'ān. They already had two children before Moses, the elder a daughter, named Miriam, and the younger her brother, Aaron. Probably the proclamation that every male child born in an Israelite home would be killed, had not yet been issued when the Prophet Aaron was born; therefore, he was saved. The third child was born when the proclamation was in full force.

10. That is, "She was not commanded to cast the child into the river immediately after birth, but to suckle it till she felt a real danger for it. For instance, if she felt that the secret had been exposed and the enemies had come to know of the child's birth through some means, or through some wretched informer from among the Israelites themselves, she should place the child in a box and cast it into the river, without any hesitation. According to the Bible, the Prophet Moses' mother kept him hidden for three months after his birth. The Talmud adds that the Pharaoh's government had appointed Egyptian women who carried infants into the Israelite homes, and would make these babies cry, so as to make any hidden Israelite infants also cry and be thus discovered. This new method of spying worried Moses' mother and in order to save her child's life, she cast him into the river three months after his birth. Upto this point the version given by these Books is the same as the Qur'ān's, and the event of casting the box into the river has also been described just as the Qur'ān has described it. In Sūrah Ṭā Hā it has been said: "Put this child in a box and place the box in the river." (v. 39). The same has been said by the Bible and the Talmud. According

to these, the Prophet Moses' mother made a basket of reeds and covered it with slime (tar) and with pitch to make it watertight. Then she laid the child in it and placed it in the river Nile. But the most important thing, which the Qur'ān mentions, has found no mention anywhere in the Israelite traditions, that is, that the Prophet Moses' mother had done all this according to an inspiration from Allah, and Allah had already assured her that by following that device not only would her child remain safe and secure but the child would ultimately be restored to her, and that her child would become Allah's Messenger in the future.

11. This was not their aim, but the ultimate destiny of their act. They picked up the child through whom they were to be destroyed in the end.

12. What one understands from this is briefly this: "When the ark or the basket was carried by the river to the place where Pharaoh's palaces were situated, the servants of Pharaoh picked it up and took it before the king and the queen. It is just possible that the king and the queen were at that time strolling along the river bank and might have noticed the basket and ordered it to be picked up. When they saw a child in it, they could easily guess that it belonged to an Israelite family. For it came from the quarters inhabited by the Israelites, whose sons were being put to death in those days. It was understood that somebody had hidden the child for some time but when it could not be hidden any longer, it was cast to the river in the hope that it might be picked up and rescued from death. With this in view the most obedient servants submitted that the king order the child to be killed forthwith, for it might prove dangerous for him. But the Pharaoh's wife was a woman and might even be childless. Then it was a lovely child, as Allah has reminded Moses in Ṭā Hā: 39, thus: "I had cast on you love from Myself." That is "I had made you such a lovely child that the beholders could not help regarding you with love." Therefore, the woman could not help feeling for him, and said to the king, "Do not kill him, but let us adopt him. When he grows up in our house as our son, he will not know that he was an Israelite: he will rather think he is one of Pharaoh's own kinsfolk, and he will be useful for us as against the Israelites."

According to the Bible and the Talmud, the woman who had counselled adoption of Moses was Pharaoh's daughter, but according to the Qur'ān his wife (*imra'at-u-Fir'aun*). Obviously, the direct Word of Allah is more reliable than the verbal traditions which were compiled centuries afterwards. Therefore, it is absolutely needless to translate *imra'at-u-Fir'aun* as "a woman of Pharaoh's family" against the Arabic idiom and usage only for the sake of seeking conformity with the Israelite traditions.

فَبَصَّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جَنْبٍ وَهُوَ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَحَرَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ
 قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نِصْحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾
 فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَىٰ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَلِتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَ
 لَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَكَمَا بَلَغَ أَسَدَاهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ أَيْتَانُهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا
 وَكَذَلِكَ نَجِزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا
 فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ
 فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِنَ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَىٰ الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۖ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ
 عَلَيْهِ ۗ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
 إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ۖ فَاغْفِرْ لِي ۖ فَغَفَرَ لَهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
 بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا
 يَتَرَقَّبُ ۖ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ ۗ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّكَ
 لَغَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾ فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا ۖ قَالَ يٰمُوسَىٰ
 ائْتِرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ ۗ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ
 جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ
 مِّنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَىٰ ۖ قَالَ يٰمُوسَىٰ إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ
 فَاخْرُجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ
 نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَكَمَا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبِّي
 أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَكَمَا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةً مِّنَ
 النَّاسِ يَسْتَفُونَ ۖ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ۗ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا

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On the other hand, the heart of Moses' mother was sorely distressed. She would have disclosed his secret, had We not strengthened her heart so that she might have faith (in Our promise). She said to his sister, "Follow him up." So, she watched him from a distance in a manner that (the enemies) did not notice it.¹³ And We had already forbidden the breasts of the nurses for the child.¹⁴ (On seeing this) the girl said to them, "Shall I tell you of a house whose people will bring him up for you and look after him well?"¹⁵ Thus We restored Moses¹⁶ to his mother so that her eyes might be cooled and she might not grieve and she might know that Allah's promise was true.¹⁷ But most people do not know this.

10-13

When Moses had reached his full maturity and become full-grown,¹⁸ We gave him judgement and knowledge;¹⁹ thus do We reward the righteous. (One day) he entered the city at a time when the people were heedless.²⁰ There he saw two men fighting, the one of his own people, the other of his enemies. The one belonging to his own people asked his help against the one belonging to the enemy. Moses gave him a blow²¹ and killed him. (On seeing what had happened) Moses said, "This is the work of Satan: he is a deadly enemy (of man) and an open misleader."²² Then he said, "O my Lord, I have sinned against myself, so forgive me." So, Allah forgave him: He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.²⁴ Moses promised, "O my Lord, after this favour that You have shown me,²⁵ I shall never again be a helper of the criminals."²⁶

14-17

The next morning, as he was walking in a state of fear and caution in the city, suddenly he saw the same man who had asked his help the day before, again calling him for help. Moses said, "You are certainly a misguided man."²⁷ Then, when Moses was about to assault the man, who was their enemy,²⁸ he cried out,²⁹ "O Moses! would you kill me today just as you killed a person yesterday? You certainly wish to become a tyrant in the land and

18-21

reform nothing." Then, a man came running from the other end of the city,³⁰ who said, "O Moses, the chiefs are holding consultations to kill you, so leave this place: I am your well-wisher." Hearing this, Moses left the place, in a state of fear and vigilance, and prayed, "O my Lord, save me from the wicked people."

22-23

(Leaving Egypt) when Moses set his direction towards Madyan,³¹ he said, "I expect that my Lord will guide me to the right path."³² And when he arrived at the well of Madyan,³³ he saw a multitude of people watering their animals, and apart from them, two women keeping their animals back. Moses asked the women, "What is your worry?" They said, "We cannot water our animals until these shepherds have taken away their animals; and our father is a very old man."³⁴

13. That is, the girl walked along and watched the floating basket in such a manner that the enemies could not know that she had anything to do with the child in it. According to the Israelite traditions, this sister of the Prophet Moses was 10 to 12 years old. She followed up her brother intelligently and cleverly and ascertained that he had been picked up by the Pharaoh's household.

14. That is, "The child would not take to any nurse whom the queen would call for suckling him."

15. This shows that the sister did not go and sit back at home when she found that her brother had reached Pharaoh's palace, but cleverly hung about the palace to watch every new development. Then, when she found that the child was not taking to any nurse, and the queen was anxious to get a nurse who would suit it, the intelligent girl went straight into the palace, and said, "I can tell you the whereabouts of a nurse, who will bring him up with great affection."

Here it should be borne in mind that in old days the well-to-do and noble families of these countries generally used to entrust their children to nurses for bringing up. We know that in the time of the Holy Prophet also nurses from the suburbs used to visit Makkah from time to time in order to get infants from the well-to-do families for suckling and nursing on rich wages. The Holy Prophet himself was brought up by Ḥalimah Sa'diyah in the desert. The same custom was prevalent in Egypt. That is why the Prophet Moses' sister did not say that she would bring a suitable nurse, but said that she would tell

them of a house whose people would take up the responsibility of bringing him up with care and affection.

16. According to the Bible and the Talmud, the child was named "Moses" in Pharaoh's house. It is not a Hebrew but a Coptic word, which means, "I drew him out of the water", for in Coptic *mo* meant water and *oshe* rescued.

17. Another good thing that resulted from this wise device by Allah was that the Prophet Moses could not become a real prince in Pharaoh's house, but grew up among his own people and became fully aware of his family and community traditions and his ancestral religion. Thus, instead of growing up as a member of Pharaoh's class and people he arose sentimentally and intellectually as a full-fledged Israelite.

In a *Hadith* the Holy Prophet has said: "He who works to earn his livelihood and keeps in view Allah's goodwill also, has a likeness with the Prophet Moses' mother, who suckled her own son as well as received her wages for the service, too." That is, although such a person works to earn a living for his children, since he works honestly with a view to pleasing God—he is just and upright in his dealings with others, seeks lawful provisions for himself and his children in the spirit of God's worship—he does deserve a reward from Allah even for earning his own livelihood.

18. That is, when he had attained his full mental and physical development. In this connection, different ages of the Prophet Moses have been mentioned in the Jewish traditions. Some say he was 18, others have mentioned 20 years and still others 40 years. According to the New Testament, he was 40 years old. (Acts, 7 : 23). But the Qur'an does not mention any age. For the purpose of the incident being mentioned in the following verses, it is enough to know that he had attained his full maturity at that time.

19. *Hukm* implies wisdom, understanding and power of judgement, and *'Ilm* is both religious and worldly knowledge. The Prophet Moses became familiar with the teachings of his forefathers—the Prophets Joseph, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham (peace be upon all of them)—through his contact with his parents, and with the sciences prevalent in Egypt by virtue of his training as a prince in the king's palace. Here the gift of *Hukm* (wisdom) and *'Ilm* (knowledge) does not refer to the gift of Prophethood, because Prophethood was bestowed on Moses several years afterwards, as is mentioned below, and has already been mentioned in Ash-Shu'arāā : 21 above.

Regarding his education and training while as a prince the New Testament says: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." (Acts, 7 : 22). The Talmud says: "Moses grew up, a handsome lad, in the palace of the king: he

dressed royally, was honoured by the people, and seemed in all things of royal lineage. He visited the land of Goshen daily, observing the rigour with which his brethren were treated Moses urged the king of Egypt to grant the men of Goshen one day of rest from the labour, in each week, and the king acceded to his request. Moses said, 'If you compel them to labour steadily their strength will fail them; for your benefit and profit allow them at least one day in the week for rest and renewal of strength', And the Lord was with Moses, and his fame extended through all the land." (H. Polano : *The Talmud Selection*, pp. 128-29).

20. It might be the early morning, or midday in summer, or night in winter, when the roads were deserted and there was all quiet in the city. The words "entered the city" indicate that the royal palaces were situated outside the capital, away from the common population. The words used are "entered the city" and not "came out in the city", because the Prophet Moses lived in the royal palace.

21. The word *wakaza* in the original means both giving a slap and giving a blow. We have adopted "Moses gave a blow" for the reason that a blow can cause death but not so a slap.

22. One can imagine the state of utter remorse and confusion in which the Prophet Moses uttered these words when he saw the Egyptian fall down after receiving the blow and breathe his last. He had no intention to murder, nor is a blow struck to kill, nor can one expect that a healthy person would die on receiving a blow. That is why the Prophet Moses exclaimed: "This is the work of Satan! He has made me do this in order to work some great mischief, so³ that I am accused of killing an Egyptian while defending an Israelite, and a violent storm of anger and indignation is aroused in the whole of Egypt not only against me but the whole Israelite community." In this connection, the Bible gives a different version from the Qur'ān. It declares the Prophet Moses to be guilty of wilful murder. It says that when Moses saw an Egyptian and an Israelite fighting, "He (Moses) looked this way and that way, and when he saw that *there was* no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." (Exod. 2: 12). The same is the version of the Talmud also. Now anybody can see how the Israelites brand the characters of their elders with infamy and how the Qur'ān exonerates them. The verdict of common sense also is that a wise and discreet person, who was to become a great Prophet in the future, and who had to give man a great code of law and justice, could not be such a blind nationalist that seeing a member of his own community fighting with a man of the other community, he would be so infuriated that he would kill the other person wilfully. Evidently, it could not be lawful to kill the Egyptian only for the sake of

rescuing an Israelite from his tyranny.

23. What the Prophet Moses meant by this prayer was: "O my Lord, forgive this sin of mine, which you know I have not committed wilfully, and also cover and conceal it from the people."

24. This has two meanings and both are implied here: Allah pardoned Moses' error as well as concealed his sin from the people so that neither any Egyptian nor any official of the Egyptian government passed that way at that time that he might witness the incident. So, the Prophet Moses got an opportunity to escape undetected from the place of the occurrence of murder.

25. That is, "The favour of concealing my 'act' from my enemies and enabling me to escape unharmed from Egypt."

26. This pledge of the Prophet Moses is in very comprehensive words. What he meant by this was that he would neither become a helper of an individual nor of those who perpetrated cruelty and tyranny in the world. Ibn Jarīr and several other commentators have rightly understood this to mean that on that very day the Prophet Moses pledged to sever his relations with Pharaoh and his government, for it was a tyrannical government, which had set up a wicked system on God's earth. He realized that it was not for any honest person to continue as a functionary of a tyrannical kingdom and become an instrument of increasing its power and grandeur.

The Muslim scholars in general have deduced from this pledge of the Prophet Moses that a believer should completely refrain from helping a tyrant, whether the tyrant in an individual, or a group, or a government or kingdom. Somebody asked Ḥaḍrat 'Atā' bin Abī Rabāḥ, the well-known follower of the Companions, "My brother is secretary to the governor of Kūfah, under the Umayyids. Though he does not decide the disputes of the people, the decisions, however, are issued through his pen. He has to continue in this service because this is his only source of income." Ḥaḍrat 'Atā' recited this verse, and said, "Your brother should throw away his pen: the Providence is Allah."

Another secretary asked 'Āmir Sha'bī, "O Abū 'Amr, I am only responsible for writing down and issuing the judgements: I have nothing to do with passing them. Is it lawful provision for me?" He replied, "It is just possible that a sentence of murder is passed against an innocent person and it is issued under your pen; or a person's property is confiscated unjustly; or somebody's house is ordered to be pulled down, and the orders are issued under your pen." Then the said Imām recited this verse, hearing which the secretary said, "After this day my pen will not be used for issuing judgements of the Umayyids." The Imām said, "Then Allah also will not deprive you of your daily bread."

قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصَدَرَ الرِّعَاءُ وَابْنَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ
 تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ فَجَاءَتْهُ
 إِحْدَاهُمَا تَتَشْتَى عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ إِنَّ ابْنَ يَدْعُوكَ لِيجْزِيكَ أَجْرًا مَا
 سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقِصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ
 مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا بَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ
 الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ
 تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَنِي حَبِيبٌ فَإِنْ أَتَيْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ
 أَسْأَلَكَ عَلَيْهِ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ
 أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ فَلَمَّا
 قَضَى مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا قَالَ
 لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا تَلْعَلْ أَتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ
 الْمُبْرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يُمُوسَى إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ثُمَّ وَانْ أَلْقَى
 عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يُمُوسَى
 أَقْبَلَ وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْأَمِينِينَ أَسْلَكَ يَدَاكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ
 مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ وَاضْمُمُ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ فَذُنُوبُكَ بُرْهَانٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
 إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ
 مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَآخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِي وَأَخِي هَارُونَ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا
 فَأَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ قَالَتْ سَنَشُدُّ

Hearing this Moses watered their animals for them, then turned and sought a shady place and said, "Lord, I stand in need of any good that You may send down to me." (Not long afterwards) one of the two women came bashfully towards him,³⁵ and said, "My father calls you so that he may reward you for watering our animals for us."³⁶ When Moses went to him and narrated to him his whole story he said, "Have no fear for you have now escaped from the wicked people."

One of the two women said to her father, "Dear father, employ this man as a servant, for the best man for you to employ as a servant can be the one who is strong and trustworthy."³⁷ Her father said (to Moses),³⁸ "I wish to give you one of my daughters in marriage provided that you serve me for eight years; and if you wish you may complete ten. I do not want to be harsh to you; if God wills, you will find me a righteous man." Moses replied, "Be it an agreement between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I complete, let there be no injustice to me after that; and Allah is a witness to what we have agreed upon."³⁹

When Moses completed the term⁴⁰ and he was travelling with his family, he saw a fire in the direction of Tūr.⁴¹ He said to his family, "Stay a while: I have seen a fire: I may bring some information from there, or a burning brand with which you may warm yourselves." When he reached there, a voice called out from a tree in the blessed ground⁴² on the right side⁴³ of the valley: "O Moses, I am Allah, Lord of the universe." And (it was commanded), "Cast down your staff." When Moses saw that the staff was writhing like a snake, he turned about and fled and did not even look behind. (It was said,) "Moses, come back and have no fear: you are quite safe. Put your hand into your bosom: it will come out shining, without any harm to you;⁴⁴ and fold back your arm to ward off fear.⁴⁵ There are two clear Signs from your Lord to be shown to Pharaoh and his courtiers: they are very disobe-

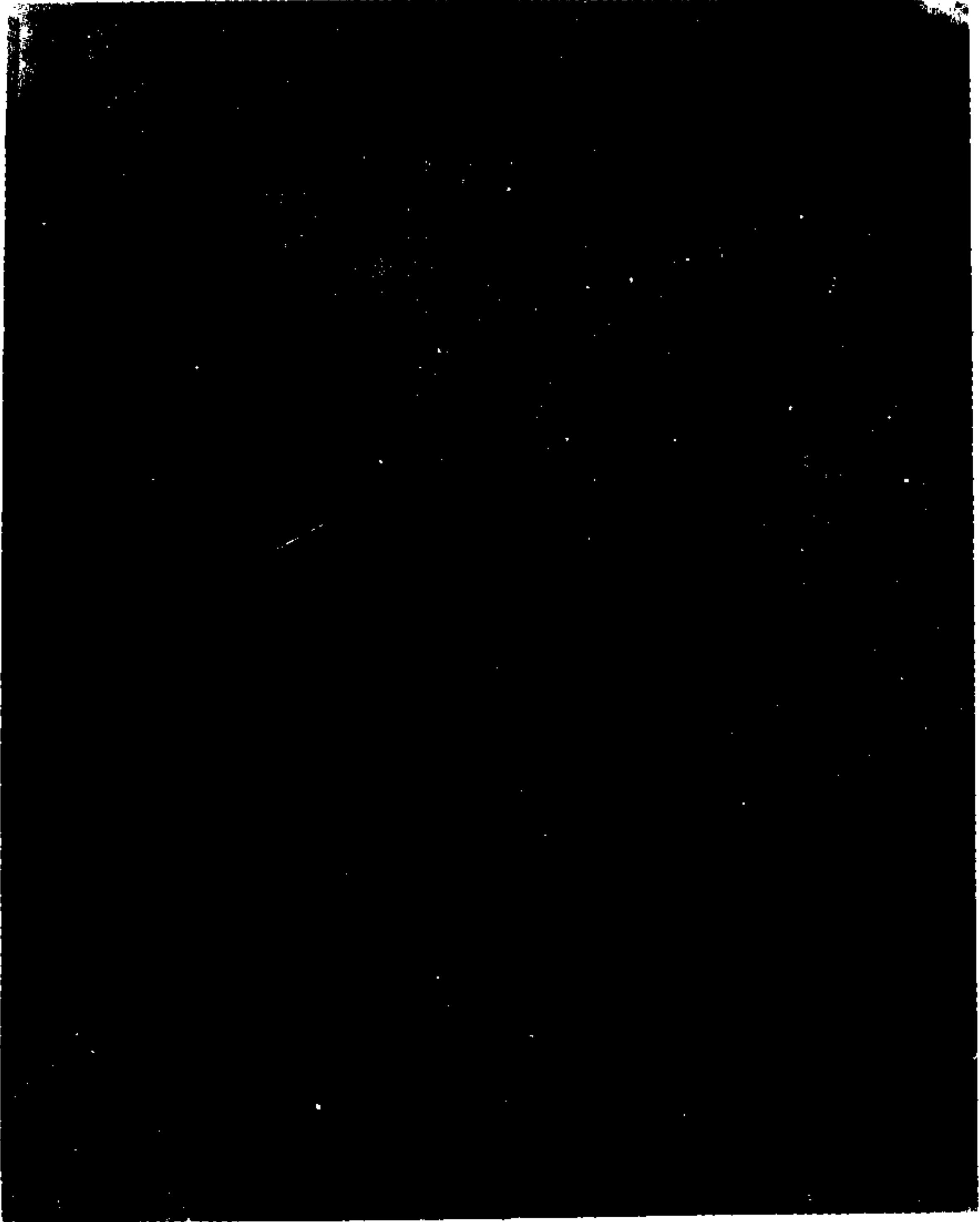
dient people indeed."⁴⁶ Moses submitted, "My Lord, I have killed a man of theirs: I fear that they will put me to death;⁴⁷ and my brother Aaron is more eloquent of tongue than I: send him with me as a helper so that he may support me; I fear that they will treat me as a liar." Allah said, "We shall strengthen your hand with your brother and shall give both of you such authority that they will not be able to harm you in any way. With Our Signs you and your followers only shall triumph."⁴⁸

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which was said to be the well where the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had watered the goats. The same has been related by Abul Fidā' (d. 732 A.H.) in *Taqvīm al-Buldān* and Yāqūt in *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, on the authority of Abū Zaid Anṣarī (d. 216 A.H.), that the natives point to the same well there as the well of Moses. This indicates that the tradition is being handed down since centuries among the people, and therefore, it can be confidently asserted that this is the same place which has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. See some photographs of this on the opposite page.

34. That is, "We are women: it is not possible for us to water our animals by resisting these shepherds. Our father is too old to perform this rigorous duty. There is no other male member in the house either. Therefore, we, the womenfolk, have to come out to perform these chores, and until all the shepherds have watered their animals and left, we have to wait." This whole meaning was conveyed by the ladies in a brief sentence, which is indicative of their modesty. They did not want to have a lengthy conversation with a stranger, but at the same time, they did not like that he should form a wrong impression about their family, thinking how lethargic were the menfolk who sat back in their homes and sent the women to perform outdoor duties.

About the father of these ladies traditions that have become current among the Muslims are that he was the Prophet Shu'aib (peace be upon him), but the Qur'ān makes no allusion to this, although Prophet Shu'aib is a prominent character of the Qur'ān. If he were really the father of the ladies, it would have been clearly mentioned here. No doubt there are some traditions in which his name has been mentioned, but both 'Allāma Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr concur that none of them has been authentically reported. That is why great commentators like Ibn 'Abbās, Hasan Baṣri, Abū 'Ubaidah and Sa'id bin Jubair have relied on the Israelite traditions and mentioned the same names of this person-



The well where, according to local tradition, the Prophet Moses had watered the goats.



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age which appear in the Talmud, etc. Evidently, if the name of Shu'aib had actually been reported from the Holy Prophet, these scholars would not have mentioned any other name.

The Bible mentions him as Re'uel in one place and Jethro in another (Exod. 2: 16-18, 3: 1, 18: 5), and says that he was the priest of Midian. In the Talmudic literature he has been variously called as Re'uel, Jethro and Hobab. The present-day Jewish scholars are of the view that Jethro was a synonym for "his excellency" and his real name was Re'uel or Hobab. Similarly, they differ about the meaning of the word Kohen. Some regard it as a synonym of priest and others of prince.

According to the Talmud Re'uel used to visit Pharaoh from time to time before the birth of Prophet Moses, and Pharaoh relied on his knowledge and good counsel and mature opinion. But when the royal council of Egypt started consultations for the subduing of the Israelites and it was decided that their male children be killed on their birth, he did his best to stop Pharaoh from enforcing this wrong decision, warned him of its evil consequences and counselled that if he found the Israelites unbearable, he should let them go to Canaan, the land of their forefathers. These words of Re'uel angered Pharaoh, and he sent him in shame from his presence. Re'uel then left Egypt for his country, Midian, and settled there ever afterwards.

As to his religion it is commonly believed that, like the Prophet Moses, he was a follower of Prophet Abraham's Faith, for just as the Prophet Moses was a descendant of Isaac, son of Abraham (peace be upon both of them), so was he a descendant of Midian, son of Abraham. Probably due to this relationship he tried to prevent Pharaoh from persecuting the Israelites and angered him. Nisābūrī, the commentator, writes on the authority of Ḥasan Baṣrī: "He was a Muslim: he had embraced the religion of the Prophet Shu'aib." The Talmud says that he publicly condemned the idol-worship of the Midianites as a folly. Due to this the people of Midian had turned his opponents.

35. Ḥadrat 'Umar has explained this sentence, thus: "She came walking modestly, with her face covered with a part of her outer garment, unlike those immodest women, who go about wherever they like, and enter wherever they like without any hesitation." Several traditions bearing on this subject have been reported by Sa'īd bin Mansūr, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn al-Mundhir from Ḥadrat 'Umar through authentic chains of authorities. This shows that the Islamic concept of modesty which the Companions of the Holy Prophet had understood from the Qur'ān and the teaching and training of the Holy Prophet was absolutely opposed to keeping the face exposed to the

other men and moving about immodestly outside the house. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar has clearly regarded covering of the face as a symbol of modesty and exposing it to the other men as an immodesty and shamelessness.

36. She said this also out of modesty, for she had to give a sound reason for her coming to another man all alone; otherwise it was not at all necessary that a gentleman should have been rewarded if he had rendered some service to the (helpless) women in trouble. And then, in spite of hearing of a reward, the Prophet Moses' willingness to follow her forthwith to her house indicates the state of extreme helplessness in which he found himself at that time. He had left Egypt empty-handed and might have taken at least eight days to reach Midian. He must be hungry and worn out by journey. And, above all, he must be anxious to find a shelter in the unfamiliar land and a sympathetic person to give him refuge. Under this very compulsion, in spite of hearing that he was being called to be rewarded for a small service he had rendered, the Prophet Moses felt no hesitation in going with the woman. He must have thought that the prayer he had just made to God was being answered thus by God Himself. Therefore, he did not think it was right to turn down the means of hospitality provided by his Lord by an unnecessary show of self-respect.

37. It is not necessary that the girl said this to her father in his very first meeting with Moses. Most probably her father made the traveller stay with him for a couple of days, and the girl counselled him thus during that time. What she meant by this counsel was: "Father, you are old, and therefore, we girls have to go out to perform outdoor duties. We have no brother either, who could take up these chores. You may, therefore, employ this man as a servant: he is strong and will be able to face all kinds of rigours, and he is also trustworthy. He helped us only due to his noble nature when he found us standing helpless, but he never raised his eyes at us."

38. It is also not necessary that the father should have said this to Moses immediately at the daughter's counsel. One feels that he must have formed this opinion after due consideration. He must have thought: "No doubt he is a noble person, but employing a healthy and strong young man like him as a servant in a house where there are grown up daughters, would not be the right thing. When he is a gentle, educated and civilized man of a noble family (as he must have come to know from the story told by Moses), why shouldn't he be kept as a son-in-law in the house?" After reaching such a decision, he might have spoken to Moses at a suitable time.

Here again the Israelites have done a grave injustice to their illustrious Prophet, greatest benefactor and national hero. The Talmud says,

“Moses lived with Re’uel, and he looked with favour upon Ziporah, the daughter of his host, and married her.” Another Jewish tradition related in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* is to the effect: When Moses related his story to Jethro, the latter understood that he was the person at whose hand the kingdom of Pharaoh was to be destroyed according to prophecies. Therefore, he immediately imprisoned Moses so that he should hand him over to Pharaoh and get a reward. He remained imprisoned for seven or ten years in a dark underground cell, but Jethro’s daughter, Ziporah, whom he had first met at the well of water, kept visiting him in the cell secretly and providing him with food and drink. They had even decided to marry. After seven or ten years Ziporah said to her father, “Years ago you put a man in the cell and then forgot him altogether. He should have died by now. But if he is still alive, he must be a godly person.” Hearing this when Jethro went to the prison, he found Moses alive and was convinced that he had miraculously remained so. Then he married Ziporah to him.

Have the Western orientalist who are ever on the lookout for the sources of the Qur’anic narratives ever cared to see this manifest difference that exists between the Qur’anic version and the Israelite traditions?

39. Some people have taken this conversation between the Prophet Moses and the girl’s father for a contract of marriage, and have started the dispute whether service under the father can be looked upon as a dower of the daughter’s marriage, and whether such external conditions can be laid down for the marriage contract; whereas the words of the verses under discussion themselves indicate that this was not the contract of marriage but the initial proposal that is generally made before the execution of the marriage contract itself. After all, how can this be taken for a contract of marriage when it had not yet been decided which of the two girls was to be given away in marriage. The purport of the conversation was that the girl’s father said, “I am prepared to marry one of my daughters to you provided that you promise that you will stay in my house for eight to ten years and help me in performing household chores, for I am old and I have no son either, who could manage my properties. I have only daughters whom I have to send to perform outdoor duties. I want you to strengthen me as my would-be son-in-law. If you are willing to accept this responsibility, and do not intend to take away your wife soon after marriage, I will marry one of my daughters to you.” The Prophet Moses himself was in search of a shelter at that time, so he accepted the proposal. Evidently, it was a sort of contract

[Contd. on p. 92]

عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجَعْلُ لَكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِأَيْتِنَا أَنْتُمَا
وَمَنْ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغٰلِبُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِأَيْتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هٰذَا
إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرَىٰ وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ
رَبِّيَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ عِنْدِيهِ وَرَسُنَ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ
الدَّارِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا
عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلٰهِ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَهَامُنُ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِي
صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَىٰ إِلٰهِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَاسْتَكَبَرَ
هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم إِلٰهِنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ فَاَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آيَةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى التَّارِ ۗ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَ
اتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۗ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ﴿٦١﴾
وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَآئِرَ
لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِ
إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّهِيدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَلَكِنَّا أَنشَأْنَا
قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۗ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَأْوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتَلَوًا
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا ۗ وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا
وَلَكِن رَّحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتٰهُمْ مِنْ نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ لَا أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ
فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونَ مِنْ

Then, when Moses came to those people with Our clear Signs, they said, "This is nothing but false magic,⁴⁹ and we have never heard of such things in the time of our forefathers."⁵⁰ Moses replied, "My Lord is fully aware of the person who has brought guidance from Him and He alone knows who will fare best in the end; the truth is that the unjust never attain true success."⁵¹ 36-37

And Pharaoh said, "O chiefs, I do not know of any other god of yours than myself.⁵² Burn for me bricks of clay, O Hāmān, and build me a high tower so that I may climb it to see the God of Moses for I consider him to be an utter liar."⁵³ 38

He and his hosts assumed haughtiness in the land unjustly, without any right,⁵⁴ and they thought they had never to return to Us.⁵⁵ Consequently, We seized him and his hosts and cast them into the sea.⁵⁶ Now behold what fate the wicked people met! We made them leaders who invited the people to Hell-fire,⁵⁷ and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be able to get any help from anywhere. We set a curse to follow them in this world and on the Day of Resurrection, they shall be involved in an awkward predicament.⁵⁸ 39-42

After We had destroyed the former generations, We gave Moses the Book, which We made a means of enlightenment for the people, and a Guidance and a Mercy, so that they may learn lessons.⁵⁹ (O Muḥammad,) you were not present on the western side⁶⁰ when We gave Moses the Law, nor were you among the witnesses,⁶¹ but after him (until your time) We have raised up many a generation, and a long time has passed over them.⁶² You were also not present among the Midianites that you might have recited to them Our Revelations,⁶³ but it is We Who are sending to you (this news of that time). And you were also not present at the side of Tūr when We had called out (to Moses for the first time), but this is your Lord's Mercy (that you are being given this information⁶⁴) so that you 43-47

should warn those to whom no warner had come before you:⁶⁵ maybe they take heed. (This We have done) lest, when a calamity befalls them in consequence of their own misdeeds, they should say, "Our Lord, had You sent a messenger to us, we would have obeyed Your Revelations and been among the believers."⁶⁶

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that had been agreed upon between the two parties before the marriage. After this the actual marriage must have taken place according to the law and the dower also settled. There could be no question of including the condition of service in the marriage bond itself.

40. According to Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan bin 'Alī bin Abī Ṭalib, the Prophet Moses had completed the ten years term instead of the eight years. According to Ibn 'Abbās, this has been related on the authority of the Holy Prophet himself. He has said, "Moses (peace be upon him) completed the term which was more perfect and more agreeable to his father-in-law, i.e. ten years."

41. That the direction of the journey was towards Mt. Ṭūr shows that the Prophet Moses might be travelling to Egypt with his family, for Ṭūr lies on the way from Midian to Egypt. Probably Prophet Moses thought that he had stayed away from home for ten long years and the Pharaoh in whose reign he had left Egypt had also died, if he quietly went back and stayed with his people, nobody would know it.

The Biblical version of the sequence of events is different from the Qur'ān's. It says that the Prophet Moses "led the flocks (of his father-in-law) to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." There God spoke to him, and appointed him to Prophethood and commanded him to go to Egypt. Then Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law, took his permission and went to Egypt with his family. (Exod. 3 : 1, 4 : 18) Contrary to this, the Qur'ān says that the Prophet Moses left Midian with his family after completing the term and during this journey Allah spoke to him and appointed him to Prophethood.

Both the Bible and the Talmud agree that the Pharaoh in whose house Prophet Moses had been brought up had died during his stay in Midian, and now another Pharaoh was the king of Egypt.

42. That is, in the ground which was being lit up by Divine Light.

43. That is, on that side of the valley which lay to the right of the Prophet Moses.

44. These two miracles were shown to the Prophet Moses at that

time so that, firstly, he himself is fully convinced that the same Being Who is speaking to him is, in fact, the Creator and Master and Ruler of the whole system of the universe; and secondly, he should have full satisfaction that he was not going un-armed before Pharaoh, to perform the dangerous mission assigned to him, but would go well armed with the two powerful weapons.

45. That is, "Whenever you experience the fear of any danger, fold back your arm to yourself: this will strengthen your heart and will deliver you completely from every feeling of fear and dread."

The arm probably implies the right arm. The arm can be folded back in two ways: either by bringing the arm and pressing it against the side, or by pressing one hand under the armpit of the other. Probably the first way was implied, for in that case the other person cannot perceive that one is specially doing so in order to ward off fear.

The Prophet Moses was taught this device because he was being sent to counter a tyrannical government without any army and worldly equipment. He was going to meet with many a dreadful situation when a great Prophet also could not remain safe from fear and terror. Allah said to him, "Whenever you face such a situation, just do this, and Pharaoh will not be able to shake your heart in spite of all the power of his mighty kingdom."

46. The words by themselves imply this: "Go to Pharaoh with these Signs and present yourself as Allah's Messenger, and invite him and his chiefs to the obedience and worship of Allah, Lord of the worlds." That is why his appointment has not been specified here, though at other places it has been clearly stated, thus: "Go to Pharaoh for he has become rebellious." (Tā Hā : 24) And: "When your Lord called Moses, saying: 'Go forth to the wicked people—the people of Pharaoh.'" (Ash-Shu'arāā' : 10).

47. It did not mean that he was hesitant to go there because of the fear, but it meant this: "Kindly make some such arrangement that I am not apprehended on the charge of murder just on arrival even before I may convey to them Your message, for in that case the very object for which I am being sent will be defeated." The next verse makes it plain that the Prophet Moses, by this submission, did not at all mean to reject the office of Prophethood and refuse to go before Pharaoh because of the fear.

48. This meeting of the Prophet Moses with Allah and the mutual conversation has been described in much greater detail in Sūrah Tā Hā (vv. 9-48). Anyone possessed of fine taste, who compares this Qur'ānic version with the story given in the Bible (Exod., chs. 3, 4), will be himself able to judge which of the two is Divine Revelation and which the result

of human story-telling. Besides, he will also be able to judge whether the Qur'ānic version is, God forbid, a plagiarism of the Bible and Israelite traditions, or that God Himself is describing the actual event, Who had honoured Moses by calling him up into His Presence. (For further explanation, see E.N. 19 of Sūrah Ṭā Hā).

49. The words of the Text mean: "Fabricated or forged magic." If fabrication is taken to mean falsehood, it would mean, "The staff's turning into a serpent and the shining of the hand is not any real change in the nature of the thing itself, but a mere illusion, which this man calls a miracle in order to deceive us." And if it is taken to mean a forgery it will imply: "This person has forged something which appears to be a staff, but when it is thrown on the ground, it moves like a snake. As for the hand, he has rubbed something on it so that when he draws it out of the armpit, it shines. He himself works these magical tricks but tries to make us believe that these are miracles which God has granted him."

50. The reference is to the teachings which the Prophet Moses had presented while conveying this message of *Tauḥīd*. The details have been given at other places in the Qur'ān. For example, according to Sūrah An-Nāziyāt: 18-19, he said to Pharaoh: "Will you mind to purify yourself, that I may guide you to your Lord so that you may have fear (of Him)?" And in Sūrah Ṭa Ha: 47-48: "We have come to you with Signs from your Lord; peace is for him who follows the Right Way. We have been informed by Revelation that there is punishment for him who rejects it and turns away." And: "We are Messengers from your Lord: so let the Israelites go with us." It was about these things that Pharaoh said, "Even our forefathers had never heard that there was a Being more powerful than Pharaoh of Egypt, Who was authorised to command him, to punish him, to send a man to his court to convey His instructions to him, and to warn the king of Egypt to fear Him. These are strange things which we are hearing today from a man like you."

51. That is, "You think I am a magician and a forger, but my Lord is well aware of me. He knows what sort of a man is the person whom He has appointed as a Messenger; and the final judgement rests with Him. If I am a liar, I shall meet an evil end; and if you are a liar, you should know that your end will not be good. In any case, the inevitable fact is that the unjust will not attain true success. He who is not Allah's messenger but falsely presents himself as a messenger for selfish motives, is also unjust and will not attain success. And the one who rejects a true Messenger by false accusations and suppresses the Truth by deceit and fraud, is also unjust and will never attain success."

52. By this Pharaoh did not, and could not, mean that he was the creator of his people and the earth and the heavens, for such a thing could be uttered only by a madman. Likewise, he also did not mean that they had no other deity besides him, for the Egyptians worshipped many gods, and the Pharaoh himself had been made the incarnation of the sun-god. The Qur'ān testifies that the Pharaoh himself worshipped many gods: "The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said, 'Will you leave Moses and his followers free to spread disorder in the land, and to discard you and your deities?'" (Al-A'rāf: 127) Therefore, inevitably, the Pharaoh had not used the word "god" here for himself as a creator and deity, but as an absolute and supreme sovereign. What he meant was this: "I am the owner of this land of Egypt: I alone will rule here: My law will be the law of the land; I alone shall be accepted as the fountainhead of all commands and prohibitions here. None else is entitled to give commands in this country. Who is this Moses, who has appeared as the delegate of the Lord of the universe and is conveying orders to me as though he is the ruler and I am his subordinate?" That is why he addressed his courtiers, thus: "O people: Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And are not these canals flowing beneath me?" (Az-Zukhruf : 51) And that is why he said to Moses again and again, "Have you come to turn us away from the faith of our forefathers so that you two may dominate over the land?" (Yūnus : 78) "O Moses, have you come to drive us out of our land by the power of your sorcery?" (Ṭā Hā : 57) "I fear he will change your religion, or cause mischief to appear in the land." (Al-Mu'min : 26)

If the matter is considered from this angle it will become evident that the position of Pharaoh was no different from the position of those states which claim political and legal sovereignty independent of Divine Law brought by the Prophets. Whether they accept a king as the fountainhead of law and commands and prohibitions, or the will of the nation, in any case as long as they stick to the position that the country will be ruled by their law and not by the Law of Allah and His Messengers, there will be no fundamental difference between their position and that of Pharaoh. It is, however, a different thing that the ignorant people curse Pharaoh but approve these as lawful. A person who understands reality will look for the spirit and sense and not merely for words and terminology. Pharaoh had used the word "god" for himself but these states use the term "sovereignty" in the same sense. (For further explanation, see E.N. 21 of Ṭā Hā in *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VII).

53. This was the same kind of mentality as the Russian communists of today are displaying. They launch Sputniks and Lunics and tell

the world that their these balls have not found God anywhere above. That stupid man of yore wanted to see God from the top of a tower. This shows that the extent of the imagination of the straying people during the past 3,500 years has remained where it was. They have not advanced even an inch. It is not known who told them that the Being Whom the God-worshippers acknowledge as the Lord of the universe resided somewhere above according to their belief. And if they do not see Him a few thousand feet or a few lakh miles above the earth's surface in this limitless universe, it will be a proof that He exists nowhere.

The Qur'ān does not specify whether Pharaoh actually got such a tower built and tried to see God from the top of it, but it only relates what he said. Apparently, he did not commit the folly. He only meant to befool the people.

This also is not clear whether Pharaoh was, in actual fact, a disbeliever in the Being of the Lord of the universe, or talked atheism only due to stubbornness. In this regard his sayings point to the same mental confusion which one finds in the statements of the Russian Communists. Sometimes he wanted to climb into the sky and come back to tell the world that he had nowhere seen the God of Moses, and sometimes he would say, "Why were not bracelets of gold sent down on him, or a company of angels as attendants?" (Az-Zukhruf : 53) These things are not much different from what a former Prime Minister of Russia, Khrushchev, said. He sometimes rejected God and sometimes invoked Him and swore by Him. We are of the opinion that after the passage of the period of the Prophet Joseph and his successors when Egypt was dominated by the Coptic nationalism and a political revolution took place in the country owing to the racial and nationalistic prejudice, the new leaders, in their nationalistic enthusiasm, revolted against the God also towards Whom the Prophet Joseph and his followers, the Israelites and the Egyptian Muslims, had been calling the people. They thought that if they believed in God, they would never be able to shed the influence and impact of the civilization brought about by the Prophet Joseph. For if that civilization remained, they would never be able to consolidate their political influence. For them belief in God and Muslim sovereignty were inseparable and inter-dependent. Therefore, to get rid of the one it was necessary to reject the other, although they could not root out belief in One God from the depths of their hearts.

54. That is, Allah, Lord of the worlds, alone is entitled to the right to greatness, but Pharaoh and his hosts assumed greatness when they attained a little power in a small territory on the earth.

55. That is, "They thought they were answerable to none and with this assumption they started being absolutely independently in their

day to day life.”

56. Allah in these words has depicted their worthlessness and insignificance as against their false pride. They thought they were big people, but when the respite Allah had granted them to reform themselves came to an end, they were thrown into the sea like so much rubbish.

57. That is, “They have set a precedent for the later generations as to committing injustices, rejecting the Truth and persistence in their rejection till the last, and using all sorts of devices to defend falsehood against the Truth.” They showed these ways to the people and have gone to Hell, and now their descendents are following in their footsteps and rushing towards the same doom.

58. The words in the Text mean: “On the Day of Resurrection they will be among the *maqḥūhīn*”, which has several meanings: (1) They will stand rejected and repulsed; (2) they will be wholly deprived of Allah’s mercy; and (3) they will be severely beaten up and their faces will become distorted.

59. That is, “When the former generations met with the evil consequences of turning away from the teachings of the Prophets, and they met the doom that was experienced by Pharaoh and his hosts, then Moses was granted the Book so as to usher in a new era for mankind.”

60. “Western side” : Mount Sinai, which lies to the west of the Hijāz and on which the Prophet Moses was given the Divine Law.

61. “The witnesses”: the seventy of the elders of Israel who had been summoned along with Moses for the covenant to follow the Law. (For reference, see Al-A‘rāf : 155 and Exod., ch. 24).

62. That is, “You had no direct means of obtaining this information. All this is being revealed to you by Allah. That is how you have been enabled to relate these two-thousand-year old events, in a manner as if you were an eye-witness.”

63. That is, “You did not exist at the time when the Prophet Moses reached Midian, passed ten years of his life there, and then left for Egypt. You were not preaching in the habitations of Midian that which you are preaching in the streets of Makkah. You are not relating those events as an eye-witness, but because you have been given the knowledge of these by Us through Revelation.”

64. These things have been presented as a proof of the Holy Prophet’s Prophethood. At the time when these were cited all the chiefs of Makkah and the common disbelievers were bent upon somehow proving him as a non-prophet, and, God forbid, a false claimant to Prophethood. To help and assist them in their campaign there were the Jewish scholars and the Christian monks also, who were living in

the habitations of the Hijāz. Besides, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) had not appeared all of a sudden from somewhere and started reciting the Qur'ān to the people, but he was a resident of the same city of Makkah, and no aspect of his life was hidden from the people of his city and clan. That is why when these three things were presented like an open challenge as a proof of his Prophet-hood, not a single person from Makkah and Hijāz and the entire land of Arabia could stand up to say the absurd thing which the modern orient-alists say, although those people were no less efficient in fabricating falsehood than these so-called scholars. But how could they utter an unprofitable lie that could not survive for a single moment? How could they say, "O Muḥammad, you have attained this information from such and such a Jewish scholar and a Christian monk?" For, this purpose, they could not mention any name in the entire land. For whatever name they mentioned, it would become manifest there and then that the Holy Prophet had not obtained any information from him. How could they say, "O Muḥammad, you possess a full-fledged library containing all sorts of books on ancient history and sciences and literature, from which you take help to prepare all your discourses?" For not to speak of a library, no one could seize even a scrap of paper from his house containing such information. Everyone in Makkah knew that Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) was un-lettered and no one could also say that he had had some translators at his disposal, who supplied him with translations from Hebrew and Assyrian and Greek books. Then, none of them could be so shameless as to dare claim that he had obtained this information during the trade journeys to Syria and Palestine, for he had not performed those journeys alone, but had travelled in company with trade caravans of Makkah. Had somebody made any such assertion, hundreds of living witnesses would have refuted this and testified that he had received no such instruction from anyone there. Then, within two years of the Holy Prophet's death war had started between the Romans and the Muslims. If he had any sort of discussion anywhere in Syria and Palestine with any Christian monk or Jewish rabbi, the Roman Empire would not have hesitated to launch a propaganda campaign, saying, that Muḥammad (peace be upon him), God forbid, had learnt everything from them and gone back to Makkah and proclaimed himself a Prophet. In short, at that time when the challenge of the Qur'ān was the knell of the disbelieving Quraish and the polytheists and the need of those people to refute it was far greater than of the modern orient-alists, no one could discover any material by which he could prove that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) had some other means than Revelation for obtaining

that information.

One should also know that the Qur'ān has not given this challenge only here, but at several other places also in connection with different stories. After narrating the story of the Prophet Zacharias and Mary, it was said: "These are of the 'unseen' things We are revealing to you: you were not present there when the priests of the Temple were casting lots by throwing their quills to decide which of them should be the guardian of Mary: nor were you there with them when they were arguing about it." (Āl-i-'Imrān : 44) At the end of the Prophet Joseph's story it was said: "This story which We are revealing to you is of those things that were not known to you: for you were not with the brothers (of Joseph), when they had conspired together a plot against Joseph." (Yūsuf : 102) Similarly, after relating the full story of the Prophet Noah, it was said: "These are some of the tidings of the 'unseen' which We are revealing to you. You did not know these before this nor did your people." (Hūd : 49) That this thing has been reiterated several times shows that this was one of the main arguments that the Qur'ān gave to prove its being Allah's Word and the Holy Prophet's being a Messenger of Allah. For there was no perceptible means of knowledge available to the Holy Prophet who was an un-lettered person, apart from Revelation, through which he could narrate so accurately the events that had happened hundreds and thousands of years in the past. And this was one of the important reasons why the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet were coming to believe, in larger and still larger numbers, that he was really a Prophet of Allah and received Allah's Revelations. Now one can easily imagine how important it must have been for the opponents of the Islamic movement at that time to meet this challenge, and what efforts they must have made to collect arguments and proofs against it. One can also see that if, God forbid, there was the slightest weakness in this challenge, it would not have been at all difficult for the contemporary people to provide evidence for its refutation.

65. No Prophet had been born especially in Arabia after the Prophets Ishmael and Shu'aib (peace be upon them both), during the past two thousand years or so, though teachings of the Prophets like Moses and Solomon and Jesus (peace be upon all of them) had reached the people of that land.

66. This very thing has been presented at several places in the Qur'ān as the reason for sending the Messengers, but it will not be correct to conclude from this that a Messenger should be sent on every occasion at every place for this purpose. As long as the message of a

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But when the Truth came to them from Us, they said, 48-51
 “Why has he not been given the same which was given to Moses?”⁶⁷ Have they not rejected that which had been given to Moses before?⁶⁸ They said, “Both are works of magic,⁶⁹ which assist each other.” And they said, “We believe in neither.” (O Prophet,) say to them, “Well, bring a book from Allah, which may give better guidance than these two, if you are truthful; I shall follow the same.”⁷⁰ Now, if they do not meet this demand of yours, you should know that they are, in fact, the followers of their own lusts. And who could go farther astray than the one who follows his own lusts, without guidance from Allah? Allah does not at all guide such wicked people. And We have conveyed to them the admonition over and over again so that they may take heed.⁷¹

The people whom We gave the Book before this, 52-56
 believe in this (Qur’ān),⁷² and when it is recited to them, they say, “We have believed in it: this is indeed the Truth from our Lord: we were Muslims even before this.”⁷³ These are the people who shall be given their reward twice⁷⁴ for the fortitude they showed;⁷⁵ they repel evil with good⁷⁶ and spend out of what We have provided them with.⁷⁷ And when they heard vain talk,⁷⁸ they withdrew from it, saying, “Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you: peace be on you: we do not seek the way of the ignorant.” O Prophet, you cannot give guidance to whom you please, but Allah gives guidance to whom He pleases, and He best knows those who would accept guidance.⁷⁹

They say, “If we follow this guidance with you, we 57
 shall be snatched away from our land.”⁸⁰

Is it not a fact that We have made a safe Sanctuary a dwelling-place for them, to which fruits of every kind are drawn, as a provision from Ourselves? But most of them do not know this.⁸¹

And how many habitations have We destroyed whose 58
 people exulted in their means of subsistence! Just see those

dwelling of theirs only a few of which have been inhabited after them. At last, We alone became the heirs.⁸²

59 And your Lord would never destroy habitations until He had sent in their central place a Messenger, who recited to them Our Revelations; and We would not destroy habitations until their dwellers had become wicked.⁸³

60-61 Whatever you have been given, is merely a provision for this worldly life and its adornment; and that which is with Allah is better and more lasting. Do you not use common sense? Can the person to whom We have made a good promise, which he would certainly meet, be ever like the one, whom We have only given the provisions of the worldly life, and who, on the Day of Resurrection, would be presented for punishment?⁸⁴

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Prophet remains intact in the world and the means of conveying it to others exist, there is no need for a new Prophet, unless need arises to supplement the previous message, or to supplant it by a new message, Nevertheless, when the teachings of the Prophets are forgotten, or become mixed up with errors and deviations and can no longer be relied upon as means of guidance, then the people do get a chance to make the excuse that there existed no arrangement whatever to make them aware of the distinction between the Truth and the untruth and guide them to the right way: so they could not be guided aright. To meet such an excuse Allah sends the Prophets in such conditions so that anyone who follows a wrong way after that may himself be held responsible for his going astray.

67. That is, "Why has not Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) been given all those miracles which had been given to the Prophet Moses? He also should have shown us the miracle of the staff; his hand also should have shone like the sun; his deniers also should have been struck with storms and plagues from the earth and heaven; and he also should have brought them Commandments written on stone tablets."

68. This is a reply to their objection, which implies this: "The disbelievers of Makkah had not believed in Moses either, nor followed his teachings. Therefore they had no right to say: Why has the Prophet Muhammad not been given the same miracles that were given to the Prophet Moses?" In Sūrah Sabā' : 31, this saying of the disbelievers of Makkah has been related: "We shall never believe in this Qur'ān, nor

in any other Book which came before it.”

69. That is, the Qur’ān and the Torah both.

70. That is, “I have to follow the guidance in any case, provided that it is not forged but is real guidance from God. If you possess a Divine Book which gives better guidance than the Qur’ān and the Torah, you should produce it : I shall follow it without any hesitation.”

71. That is, “As far as conveying of the admonition is concerned, we have done full justice to it in the Qur’ān in the best way. But guidance is attained only by him who gives up stubbornness and frees his heart from prejudices and is inclined to accept the Truth willingly and sincerely.”

72. This does not mean that all the people of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) affirm faith in it. This, in fact, contains an allusion to the event that occurred during the period when this Sūrah was revealed, and it was meant to put to shame the people of Makkah, as if to say, “You are denying and rejecting a blessing that has been sent in your own city, whereas the people from far off places, when they hear of it, come to recognize its worth and benefit from it.”

This event has been related by Ibn Hishām, Baihaqī and others on the authority of Ibn Ishāq, thus: “After the migration to Ḥabash when the news about the Holy Prophet’s advent and message spread in that land, a deputation of about twenty Christians came to Makkah to find out the truth, and they met the Holy Prophet in the *Masjid-al-Ḥarām*. A crowd of the Quraish also gathered around them to watch what happened. The members of the deputation asked the Holy Prophet some questions, which he answered. Then he invited them to accept Islam and recited some verses of the Qur’ān before them. When they heard the Qur’ān, tears came down from their eyes and they confirmed its being Allah’s Word and believed in the Holy Prophet. When the meeting was over and the people left, Abū Jahl and some of his men overtook them on the way, and rebuked them severely, 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 answered, “Peace be to you! We have no wish to enter an argument with you: you are responsible for your faith and we are for ours: we cannot afford to deprive ourselves knowingly of goodness.” (*Ibn Hishām*, Vol. II, p. 32; *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, Vol. III, p. 82. For further details, see E.N. 123 of *Ash-Shu‘arāā*).

73. That is, “Even before this we were believers in the Prophets and the Divine Books. Therefore, we had no other Faith than Islam and we have believed in that Book too, which this Prophet has brought

from Allah. Thus, no change has occurred in our religion: we were Muslims before even as we are Muslims now."

This saying clearly indicates that Islam is not the name of the Faith brought by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and the term "Muslim" is not only applicable to his followers, but Islam has been the Faith of all the Prophets since the very beginning and their followers were Muslims in every age. These Muslims became disbelievers only when they refused to acknowledge a true Prophet who came afterwards. But no interruption occurred in the Islam of those people who believed in the former Prophet and also affirmed faith in the Prophet who succeeded him. They continued to be Muslims as they had been Muslims before.

It is strange that even some learned men also have failed to comprehend this fact, and this clear verse also could not satisfy them. 'Allāma Suyūṭī wrote a treatise on the subject that the term "Muslim" was only reserved for the followers of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him). Then, as he himself says, when this verse came before him he was stunned: he prayed to God that He guide him in the matter. At last, instead of revising his opinion he stuck to it even more firmly and gave several interpretations of the verse, each of which is more meaningless than the other. For example, one of his interpretations is: "*We were Muslims even before this*" means: We intended to become Muslims even before the revelation of the Qur'ān, because we had been foretold by our Scriptures that it would come, and we had the intention that when it came we would accept Islam." Another interpretation is: "In this sentence, the word *bi-hī* (بِهِ) after *muslimīn* is omitted, implying: We believed in the Qur'ān beforehand, because we expected it would come, and had believed in it in anticipation. Therefore, we were Muslims, not because we believed in the Torah and the Gospels, but because we had believed in the Qur'ān as Allah's Word even before its revelation." The third interpretation is: "It had been divinely destined for us that we would accept Islam on the advent of the Holy Prophet and the revelation of the Qur'ān; therefore, we were Muslims even before this." None of these interpretations bears any impress that Divine help had become available for the right understanding of this verse.

The fact is that the Qur'ān has expressed this fundamental principle not only here, but at scores of other places also that the real Way of life is only Islam (submission to Allah), and in God's universe there can be no other way of life than this for His creatures. Since the beginning of the creation every Prophet who came for the guidance of mankind brought this very Way of Life: the Prophets themselves have always been

Muslims, and they impressed upon their followers also to live as Muslims, and all their followers who submitted to the Divine Command brought by the Prophets, were also Muslims in every age. Consider the following few verses for instance:

(1) "Indeed, Islam is the only right way of life in the sight of Allah." (Āl-i-ʿImrān: 19)

(2) "Whoever adopts any other than this way of submission (Islam), it will not be accepted from him." (Āl-i-ʿImrān: 85)

(3) "My reward is with Allah, and I have been commanded to believe like a Muslim." (Yūnus: 72)

About Prophet Abraham and his descendents it has been said:

(4) "When his Lord said to him, 'Surrender', he promptly responded, 'I have surrendered to the Lord of the universe (and become a Muslim)'. He also enjoined on his children to follow the same way. Jacob also did the same and his last will to his sons was: 'O my children, Allah has chosen the same way of life for you. Hence, remain Muslims up to your last breath.' (Dare you deny this?) Were you present at the time when Jacob was on the point of death? He asked his children, 'Whom will you worship after me?' They all answered, 'We will worship the same One Allah Whom you, your forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac acknowledged as their Allah and to Him we all surrender as Muslims'." (Al-Baqarah: 133)

(5) "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim, sound in the Faith." (Āl-i-ʿImrān: 67)

Prophets Abraham and Ishmael themselves prayed:

(6) "Lord, make us Thy Muslims and raise from our offspring a community which should also be Muslim (submissive to Thy will)." (Al-Baqarah: 128)

In connection with the story of the Prophet Lot it has been said:

(7) "We did not find in it any house of the Muslims except one." (Adh-Dhāriyāt: 36)

The Prophet Joseph prayed to Allah:

(8) "Let me die as a Muslim, and join me with the righteous in the end." (Yūsuf: 101)

Prophet Moses says to his people:

(9) "O my people, if you sincerely believe in Allah, put your trust in Him, if you are Muslims." (Yūnus : 84)

The real religion of the Israelites was not Judaism but Islam as was known to their friends and foes alike. That is why the last words that Pharaoh said while drowning were:

(10) "I have believed that there is no god but the real God in Whom the children of Israel have believed, and I am of the Muslims."

(Yūnus : 90)

Islam was the Way of Life of all the Israelite Prophets:

(11) "Indeed, We sent down the Torah wherein was Guidance and Light: thereby all the Prophets, who were Muslims, judged the cases of those who had become Jews." (Al-Mā'idah: 44).

The same was the Prophet Solomon's way of life. So when the queen of Sheba believed in him, she said:

(12) "I submit myself (as a Muslim) with Solomon to Allah, Lord of the worlds." (An-Naml: 44).

And the same was the religion of the disciples of the Prophet Jesus:

(13) "And when I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My Messenger, they said: 'We believe and bear witness that we are Muslims'." (Al-Mā'idah: 111).

In this connection, if somebody expresses the doubt that the Arabic words "Islam" and "Muslims" could not have been used in different languages and countries, it would obviously be a foolish objection. For the real thing is not the Arabic words but the meaning in which they are used in Arabic. In fact, what has been stressed in the above-cited verses is that the real Way of Life sent by God was neither Christianity nor Mosaicism nor Muhammadanism, but to surrender to the Divine Commands taught by the Prophets and the Scriptures, and whoever adopted this Way anywhere and at any time in the world, is the follower of the same universal, eternal and everlasting true Way of Life. For those who have adopted this Way, consciously and sincerely, it is no change of the faith to believe in Jesus after Moses and in Muhammad after Jesus (may Allah's peace be upon all of them), but a natural and logical demand of following the same real Way of Life (Islam). Contrary to this, those people who got into the Prophets' communities without due understanding or were born in them, and for whom nationalistic and racial and tribal prejudices were the religion, became mere Jews or Christians, and on the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) their ignorance was exposed. For by refusing to believe in the Last Prophet of Allah, they not only refused to remain Muslims in the future but also proved that they were not "Muslims" even before: they had been charmed by the personality of a Prophet or Prophets, or had taken blind conformity to their forefathers for religion.

74. That is, one reward for affirming faith in the Prophet Jesus (Allah's peace be upon him) and the second for affirming faith in Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him). The same thing has been expressed in the *Hadith* which Bukhārī and Muslim have related on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Abū Mūsā Ash'arī. He says that the Holy

Prophet said: "One of the three persons who will get a double reward is he who belonged to the people of the Book, had full faith in his Prophet and then affirmed faith in Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him)."

75. That is, "They will get a double reward for the reason that they avoided nationalistic, racial and tribal prejudices and remained steadfast on the way of true Faith. When, on the advent of the new Prophet, they were confronted by a hard test, they proved by their conduct that they were not Christ-worshippers but God-worshippers: they were not charmed by Christ's personality but were followers of "Islam". That is why when the new Prophet after Christ brought the same Islam that Christ had brought, they adopted the way of Islam under his leadership, without any hesitation, and gave up the way of those who remained stuck to Christianity."

76. That is, "They answer evil and falsehood with what is good and right: they repel injustice and mischief with what is just and noble; and they do not pay the other man back in the same coin."

77. That is, "They also make monetary sacrifices in the way of the truth. There might also be in it an allusion to this that those people had travelled from Habash to Makkah in search of the truth: they had no material gain in view when they undertook a toilsome journey involving a lot of expenses. When they heard that a man in Makkah had made a claim to be a Prophet, they thought it necessary to go and find out the truth, so that if a prophet had really been sent by God, they should not be deprived of affirming faith in him and being guided aright."

78. The reference is to the "vain talk" that Abū Jahl and his men had with the Christians from Habash, as mentioned in E.N. 72 above.

79. The context shows that the object of addressing this sentence to the Holy Prophet, after mentioning the affirmation of the Faith by the Christians from Habash, was to put the disbelievers of Makkah to shame, as if to say, "O unfortunate people, what wretches you are! People from far off places are coming to benefit from the fountainhead of blessings that has been made available in your own city, but you are wilfully depriving yourselves of it." But the same thing has been said like this: "O Muḥammad, you wish that your clansmen and your kinsfolk and your near and dear ones should benefit from this life-giving nectar, but your willing alone cannot avail. To give guidance is in the power of Allah: He favours with it only those whom He finds inclined to accept guidance. If your kinsfolk lack this inclination, how can they be favoured with this blessing?"

According to Bukhārī and Muslim, this verse was sent down with regard to the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib. When he was about to

breathe his last, the Holy Prophet tried his utmost that he should affirm faith in *Lā ilāha illallāh*, so that he might die as a Muslim, but he preferred to die on the creed of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib; that is why Allah said: "You cannot give guidance to whom you please.." But this is a well-known method of the traditionists and commentators that when they find that a particular verse applies to an event of the Prophet's time, they regard it as the occasion of the verse's revelation. Therefore, it cannot be necessarily concluded from this and the other similar traditions that have been related in Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc. on the authority of Ḥadrat Abū Hurairah, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, etc. that this verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ was revealed on the occasion of Abū Ṭālib's death. This only shows that the truth of its meaning became most evident only on that occasion. Though the Holy Prophet sincerely wished that every man should be blessed with guidance, the person whose dying on disbelief could cause him the greatest anguish and of whose guidance he was most desirous on account of personal bonds of love and affection, was Abū Ṭālib. But when he was helpless in affording guidance even to him, it became evident that it did not lie in the power of the Prophet to give guidance to one or withhold it from another, but it lay wholly in the power of Allah. And Allah bestows this favour on whomever He wills not on account of a family or tribal relationship, but on the basis of one's sincerity, capability and inclination of the heart.

80. This was the most important excuse which the unbelieving Quraish made for not accepting Islam. To understand it fully we shall have to see what was the position of the Quraish historically which they feared would be affected if they accepted Islam.

The importance that the Quraish gained initially in Arabia was due to their being genealogically the descendents of the Prophet Ishmael, and therefore, the Arabs looked upon them as the children of the Prophets. Then, when they became the custodians of the Ka'bah through Qusayy bin Kilāb's sagacity, and Makkah became their home, their importance grew, because they were the attendants of the most sacred shrine of Arabia, and its priests too. Therefore, every Arab tribe had to have relations with them on account of the annual pilgrimage. Taking advantage of this central position the Quraish started gaining prominence as a commercial people, and to their great good fortune, the political conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and Iran helped them to gain an important place in the international trade. Iran in those days had blocked entrance to all the trade routes between Rome, Greece, Egypt and Syria in the north and China, India, Indonesia and

eastern Africa in the south-east. The only exception was the Red Sea route. This also was blocked when Yaman fell to Iran. After this no way of the transit of trade goods remained except that the Arab merchants should transport merchandise of the Roman territories to the harbours of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and then lift trade goods of the eastern countries from these harbours and transport them to the Roman territories. This sort of arrangement made Makkah an important centre of the International trade, and the Quraish were its monopolists. But the chaotic conditions prevailing in Arabia did not allow smooth transit of the trade goods unless the Quraish had had pleasant relations with the tribes through whose territories the trade caravans passed. For this the religious influence of the Quraish was not enough; they had had to enter into treaties with the tribes concerned, pay them dividends from their profits, and make gifts to the tribal chiefs and other influential people. Besides, they traded in money-lending also on a vast scale, which had ensnared the merchants and the chiefs of almost all the neighbouring tribes.

Such were the conditions when the Holy Prophet gave his message of *Tauḥīd*. More than the prejudice of ancestral religion what caused the Quraish the greatest provocation against it was that in it they saw their own interests in jeopardy. They thought that even if polytheism and idol-worship were proved wrong and *Tauḥīd* right by rational arguments and reasoning, it was ruinous for them to accept *Tauḥīd*. For as soon as they did so the whole of Arabia would rise in revolt against them. Then, they would be ousted from the custodianship of the Ka'bah, and all their bonds and pacts of friendship with the polytheistic tribes would be severed, which alone guaranteed the safe transit of their trade caravans through their territories. Thus, the new Faith would not only put an end to their religious influence but also to their economic prosperity, and they might even be forced by the Arabs to quit Makkah.

This presents a strange phenomenon of the lack of insight on the part of the world-worshippers. The Holy Prophet tried his best to make them believe that if they accepted his Message, the whole world would yield and submit to them. (See also Introduction to Sūrah Ṣād below). But they saw their death in it. They thought that the change of the Faith would not only deprive them of their wealth and prosperity and influence but would render them so completely helpless in the land that the birds of the sky would pick and eat their flesh. They could not foresee the time when a few years afterwards the whole of Arabia was going to be ruled by a central government under the Holy Prophet himself. Then even during the lifetime of their own generation Irān and 'Irāq and Syria and Egypt were going to fall, one after the other, to the

same central authority and within a century of this utterance by them Caliphs from the clan of the Quraish itself were to rule over vast territories, from Sind to Spain and from Caucasus to the coasts of Yaman.

81. This is the first reply to their excuse by Allah. It means this: "It is all due to the sacredness and the central position of this Sanctuary that the merchandise of the entire world is being drawn and attracted to this barren and uncultivated valley, for your benefit and use. You should know that you are in no way responsible for giving it the central position it enjoys and for the state of security that prevails in the areas around it. 2,500 years ago a servant of Allah came to this barren valley in the bare mountains with his wife and suckling child. Here he built a small room with stone and mud, proclaimed that Allah had made it a Sanctuary, and that the people should come to visit it and go round it in worship and adoration. Now this is only due to Allah's blessing that this Sanctuary has been the centre of Arabia for the past 25 centuries. Peace reigns here even when there is chaos all around. It is held in the highest esteem by every Arab, and thousands of people are drawn to it every year for going round it in worship. It is only by virtue of this blessing that you are looked upon as the spiritual leaders of Arabia and a large part of the international trade is under your control. Now, do you think that if you turned and revolted against that God Who has favoured you with this blessing, you will prosper, but as soon as you followed His Faith you would be ruined?"

82. This is the second answer to their excuse. It means to imply this: "The worldly wealth and prosperity of which you are so proud and whose probable danger of loss makes you stick to falsehood and turn away from the Truth, was also possessed once by 'Ād and Thamūd and Sabā' and the people of Lot. Then, did it save them from destruction? After all, a high standard of living is not the only aim in life that man should endeavour to pursue it regardless of every consideration for truth and falsehood, and refuse to accept the right way only because there was a risk of losing it if one did so. Do you have any guarantee that if you persisted in the errors and evils that ruined the prosperous peoples of the past, you would remain safe and never meet the doom that they met?"

83. This is the third answer to their excuse. It means this: "The nations which were destroyed before you had become wicked. To warn them finally Allah sent His Messengers, but when they took no notice of their warnings and persisted in their evil ways, they were destroyed. The same is the case with you now. You have also become wicked, and a Messenger has come to you to warn you too. Now if you persist in your disbelief and denial, you will not be safeguarding your prosperity and comforts of life but endangering them. The destruction that you

are afraid of will overtake you not because of believing but on account of refusal to believe.”

84. This is the fourth answer to their excuse. To understand it fully one should bear in mind two things :

First, the present life which is no more than a few years for anyone, is only the temporary phase of a journey. The real life which will be everlasting is yet to come. In this life man may amass as much provision as he may please and live the few years at his disposal as comfortably as he can, it will in any case come to an end, and man will depart from the world empty-handed. No sensible person will like to make the bad bargain of suffering the everlasting distress and affliction in the Hereafter in exchange for the pleasures and comforts of his brief sojourn in the world. As against this, he would rather prefer to face a few years of hardships here and earn the goodness that may earn him everlasting bliss and comfort in the eternal life of the Next World.

Secondly, Allah's Religion does not demand that man should totally refrain from seeking and enjoying the good things of life and discard its adornments in any case. Its only demand is that he should prefer the Hereafter to the world, for the world is perishable and the Hereafter everlasting; and the pleasures of the world are inferior and of the Hereafter superior. Therefore, man must try to attain those provisions and adornments of the world that may enable him to fare well in the everlasting life of the Next World, or at least protect him from the eternal loss there. But in case there is a question of a comparison between the two, and the success of the world and of the Hereafter oppose and contradict each other, the Faith demands, and this is the demand of man's good sense too, that he should sacrifice the world to the Hereafter, and should never adopt the way of only seeking the transitory provisions and adornments of this world, which inevitably lead to his ruin in the Hereafter for ever.

Keeping these two things in view, let us see what Allah says to the disbelievers of Makkah in the foregoing sentences. He does not tell them to wind up their business, stop their trade and follow His Prophets and become mendicants. What He says is that the worldly wealth of which they are so enamoured, is very meagre and they can utilize it only for a few days in this worldly life. Contrary to this, that which is with Allah is much better both in quality and in quantity and is also everlasting. Therefore, they would be foolish if for the sake of benefiting by the limited blessings of this transitory life, they adopted the way whose evil results they will have to suffer in the form of everlasting loss in the Next World. They should judge for themselves as to who is

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لَا قِيَّةَ كَمَنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾
وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا
إِلَيْكَ مَا كَانُوا إِلَّا نَا يَتَّبِعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ
يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ
فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَعِمَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا
يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَحَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ
الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ سُبْحَانَ
اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾
وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ
وَالِيهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ
الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ أَوْ لَظْلُمٍ أَسْمِعُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ
إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ
يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَسْكُونُونَ فِيهِ أَوْ لَظْلُمٍ تَبْصُرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ
اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَ
يَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَتَرَعْنَا
مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَ
ضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ فَبَغَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولَى الْقُوَّةِ

And (let them not forget) the Day when He will call them and ask, "Where are those associates of Mine whom you deemed as such?"⁸⁵ Those concerning whom this Word will be true,⁸⁶ will say, "Our Lord, these are indeed the people whom we had misled: we led them astray even as we ourselves were led astray. We plead our innocence before You:⁸⁷ they did not worship us."⁸⁸ Then it will be said to them, "Call now on those whom you held as (Allah's) partners."⁸⁹ They will call them, but will get no answer, and they will see the torment. Would that they had followed the guidance!

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And (let them not forget) the Day when He will call them and ask, "What answer did you give to Our Messengers?" At that time, no reply will strike them, nor will they be able to consult one another. However, the one who has repented here and believed and done good works, can expect to be among those who will attain true success there.

65-67

Your Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses (for His work whomever He pleases). To choose is not for them.⁹⁰ Allah is Pure and Exalted far above the *shirk* that these people commit. Your Lord knows what they hide in their hearts and what they reveal.⁹¹ He is Allah, the One: none but He is worthy of worship: to Him is all praise due, both in this world and in the Hereafter: Sovereignty is His, and to Him shall all of you be returned. O Prophet, say to them, "Have you ever considered that if Allah should make the night perpetual for you, till the Day of Resurrection, which deity, besides Allah, would bring you light? Don't you hear anything?" Ask them, "Have you ever considered that if Allah should make the day perpetual for you, till the Day of Resurrection, which deity, besides Allah, would bring you the night so that you may have rest in it? Don't you see anything?" It is His Mercy that He has made the night and the day for you so that you may have rest (in the night) and seek your Lord's bounty (in the day) ; maybe that you are grateful.

68-73

74-75

(They should be mindful of) the Day when He will call them and ask, "Where are those associates of Mine whom you deemed as such?" And We shall bring forth from every nation a witness⁹² and say, "Bring now your proof."⁹³ Then they will come to know that the Truth is with Allah alone, and all falsehoods that they had forged will vanish.

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successful: He who exerts himself in the service of his Lord and then is blessed with His favours for ever, or he who will be produced as a culprit in His Court, only after having had an opportunity of enjoying unlawful wealth for a few days in the world.

85. This discourse is in continuation of the fourth answer, and is linked with the last sentence of the preceding verse. It means to imply this: Those who persist in the evil of *shirk* and idol-worship and refuse to believe in the Prophet only for the sake of their worldly interests, will meet with such and such evil consequences in the eternal life of the Hereafter. They should, therefore, carefully judge for themselves whether it would be a good bargain if they were to be doomed to such an end, after they had enjoyed fully the provisions and adornments of the short worldly life even if no calamity befell them in the world.

86. This implies those satans from among jinns and men, who had been set up as associates of God in the world, whose teachings had been followed in preference to Divine Commandments, and dependence on whom had made the people give up the Right Way and adopt the wrong ways of life. Such persons may not have been called gods and lords as such, but since they were worshipped and obeyed as one should worship and obey only God, they were inevitably made partners in Godhead.

87. That is, "We did not lead them astray forcibly. We neither deprived them of their powers of seeing and hearing nor of their powers of thinking, nor there ever arose a situation when they wanted to follow the right way but we might have forcibly pulled them to the wrong way. But just as we ourselves had gone astray of our own free will, so they also of their own free will accepted the wrong way when we presented it before them. Therefore, we are not responsible for what they did: we are responsible for our acts and they are responsible for theirs."

There is a subtle point to be noted here. Allah, in fact, will question those who had set up others as associates with Him, but before they make an answer, those who had been set up as associates will speak

up. The reason is this: When the common polytheists will be questioned thus, their leaders and guides will feel that their doomsday had come, for their followers will certainly blame them for their deviation. Therefore, even before the followers say something in response, the leaders will forestall them and start pleading their innocence.

88. That is, "They did not serve us but served their own selves alone."

89. That is, "Invoke them for help. In the world you had relied on them and rejected Our Commandments. So invoke them to come to your rescue here also and save you from the punishment."

90. This, in fact, is a refutation of *shirk*. Allah objects to the setting up of countless gods from among His creatures by the *mushriks* and assigning to them from themselves of attributes and ranks and offices, any says: "We Ourselves bless with whatever attributes, capabilities and powers whomever We like from among the men, angels, jinns and other servants whom We have created, and employ whomever We will for whatever service We will. But, how and wherefrom have the *mushriks* got the authority that they should make whomever they like from among My servants remover of hardships, bestower of treasures and answerer of prayers? That they should make someone the lord of rain, another the giver of jobs and children, still another bestower of health and ill-health? That they should look upon whomever they please as the ruler of a part of My Kingdom and assign to him whichever of My powers they like? Whether it is an angel or a jinn, or a prophet, or saint, or anybody else, he has been created by Us. Whatever excellences he has, have been granted by Us, and whatever service We willed to take from him, We have taken. Therefore, the selection of someone for a particular service does not mean that he should be raised from the position of a servant to godhead and worshipped instead of God, invoked for help, prayed to for fulfilment of needs, taken as maker or destroyer of destinies and possessor of divine attributes and powers.

91. The object for which this thing has been said in this context is:

A person (or persons) can make a claim before the people in this world that he is fully satisfied on rational grounds that the deviation he has adopted is sound and right, and the arguments that are given against it are not convincing; that he has adopted the deviation not due to any evil motive but with the sincerest and purest intentions; that he has never been confronted by anything that might have proved him to be in the wrong. But he cannot advance such an argument before Allah, for Allah

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إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ
 اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ
 اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُنْفِسِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾
 قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۗ وَأَوَّلُكُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ
 قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَ أَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا ۗ وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ
 ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۗ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ
 الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠٣﴾
 قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا
 وَلَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ
 مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَأَصْبَحَ
 الَّذِينَ تَمَتَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ يَسُبُّوا الرَّبَّ عَدْوً
 تَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْ لَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ۗ وَيَسَاءُ
 مَا يُلْقِيهِ الْكٰفِرُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا
 فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۗ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ
 خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا ۗ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا
 كَانُوا يَحْمِلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي
 أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ۗ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ
 يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَ
 لَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْزَلَتْ إِلَيْكَ وَأَدْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا

The fact⁹⁴ is that Korah was of the people of Moses, but he rebelled against them;⁹⁵ and We had given him so many treasures that their very keys would have weighed down a band of strong men.⁹⁶ Once his people said to him, "Do not exult, for Allah does not like the exultant. Seek through the wealth that Allah has given you to make your abode in the Hereafter, and also do not forget your share from this world; and do good to others as Allah has done good to you; and do not strive to make mischief on the earth, for Allah does not like the mischief-makers." But he replied, "All that I have been given is by virtue of the knowledge that I possess."⁹⁷—Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him many such people who were mightier than him in power and strength?⁹⁸ But the criminals are not asked as to their sins.⁹⁹

76-78

One day he came out before his people in all his fineries. Those who sought the life of this world, said, "Would that we had the like of what Korah has been given! He is indeed a very lucky man." But those who possessed the knowledge, said, "Alas for you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good works, and this fortune is attained only by those who show patience."¹⁰⁰

79-80

Consequently, We sank him and his people in all his dwelling-place underground; then he had no host of supporters, who could help him against Allah, nor was he able to help himself. Now the same people who yearned for his lot the day before, began to say, "Alas! We had forgotten that Allah extends the provisions for whom He wills of His servants and restricts it for whom He wills.¹⁰¹ If Allah had not been gracious to us, He would have sunk us also underground. Alas! We did not remember that the disbelievers do never prosper."¹⁰²

81-82

That abode of the Hereafter¹⁰³ We shall reserve for those who do not seek glory in the earth,¹⁰⁴ nor wish to make mischief;¹⁰⁵ and the ultimate good is only for the Godfearing.¹⁰⁶ Whoever brings a good deed shall have a

83-84

better reward than that, and whoever brings an evil deed, the evil-doers will have their rewards according to their deeds.

85-86

O Prophet, be assured that the One Who has ordained this Qur'ān for you¹⁰⁷ will certainly bring you to the best end.¹⁰⁸ Tell these people, "My Lord best knows who has brought the guidance, and who is involved in obvious error." You never hoped that the Book would be sent down to you. Only through your Lord's mercy (has it been sent down to you);¹⁰⁹ therefore, do not be a helper of the unbelievers.¹¹⁰

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is not only aware of the open, but also of the hidden secrets of the mind and heart: He knows directly what kind of knowledge and feelings and sentiments and desires and intentions and conscience a certain person has: He is aware of the occasions and the means and the ways through which a person was warned, through which the Truth reached him, through which falsehood was proved to be falsehood to him, and also the real motives for which he preferred his deviation to the Right Way.

92. "A witness": the Prophet who had warned that community, or a rightly-guided person from among the followers of the Prophets, who had performed the duty of preaching the Truth in the community, or a means through which the message of the Truth had reached the community.

93. That is, "Present a cogent argument in your defence so that you are pardoned. You should either prove that the *shirk* and the denial of the Hereafter and Prophethood in which you persisted were the correct creed and you had adopted it on rational grounds, or, if you cannot do that, you should at least prove that no arrangement had been made by God to warn you of this error and guide you to the right path."

94. This fact also is being related in continuation of the answer to the excuse which has been the theme of the discourse from verse 57 onward. In this regard, one should bear in mind the fact that the people who feared that the Holy Prophet Muhammad's message would affect the overall national interests adversely were, in fact, the big money-owners, money-lenders and capitalists of Makkah, who by virtue of their international trade and money-lending business had become the Korahs of their time. These were the people who thought that the

real truth was to earn and amass maximum wealth. Anything that seemed to vitiate this object was an untruth which could not be accepted in any case. On the other hand, there were the common people who looked with longing eyes at these magnates and earnestly desired that they should also attain the same heights as those people had attained. In an atmosphere charged with the love of money, as it was, people considered it to be a weighty argument that if the invitation of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) towards *Tauḥīd* and the Hereafter and the moral code was accepted it would spell ruin for the Quraish not only commercially but economically too.

95. *Qārūn* who has been called Korah in the Bible and the Talmud was a first cousin of the Prophet Moses. According to the account of descent given in Exodus (6 : 18-21), the fathers of the Prophet Moses and Korah were real brothers. At another place in the Qur'ān it has been stated that this man had joined with Pharaoh in spite of being an Israelite and become one of his favourites ; so much so that one of the two ring-leaders of opposition to Prophet Moses after Pharaoh was this same Korah : "We sent Moses to Pharaoh and Hāmān and Korah with Our Signs and a clear authority of appointment, but they said, 'He is a sorcerer, a liar'." (Al-Mu'min : 23-24).

From this it follows that Korah had rebelled against his own people and become a supporter of the hostile forces which were bent upon wiping out the Israelites. On account of this rebellion against his own people he had attained a high place with Pharaoh and the two persons, besides Pharaoh, to whom the Prophet Moses had been sent were Pharaoh's minister, Hāmān, and this Israelite capitalist, Korah. All other chiefs and courtiers were of inferior status, who were not worth mentioning. The same position of Korah has been alluded to in Al-'Ankabūt : 39.

96. In the story related of him in the Bible (Num., ch. 16), there is no mention of this man's wealth. But according to the Jewish traditions, he possessed immense wealth, so much so that three hundred mules were required to carry the keys of his treasures. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, p. 556). Though greatly exaggerated this statement shows that even according to the Israelite traditions, Korah was a very wealthy man of his time.

97. The words of the Text can have two meanings: (1) "Whatever I have, I have obtained it by virtue of my own ability. It is not a bounty which somebody else might have given me as a favour without my deserving it as a right, and now I may have to render thanks for it by giving a portion of it to those who have not been given anything, as a favour, or give some of it in charity so that the bounty is not withdrawn from me."

(2) "I think God has given me this wealth in view of my qualities and excellences. Had I not been a likeable person, He would not have given me all this. That He has bestowed on me all kinds of blessings is a proof that I am His favourite and he approves of the way of life that I am following."

98. That is, "Did this person who was proud of being so knowledgeable and wise and well-informed and capable never know that people with greater wealth and grandeur and power and might than him had lived before him in the world, and Allah, at last, had annihilated them completely? If capability and skill and competence are the only factors conducive to worldly progress, then why didn't these virtues avail them when they were destroyed? And if the worldly progress of a person is a sure proof that Allah is pleased with him and approves of his deeds and qualities, then why were those people doomed to destruction at all?"

99. That is, "The criminals have always been claiming to be the best people, who are free from every evil, but their punishment is not dependent on their own confessions. Whenever they are seized, they are not seized on the basis of their own confessions of sins, etc."

100. That is, "This kind of character and the way of thinking and the bounty of Allah's reward falls to the lot of only those who stick firmly and steadfastly and patiently to the lawful ways in life, whether by so doing they are able to earn only a bare living, or are enabled to become millionaires, but are never inclined to follow the unlawful ways even if they promise all the benefits and wealth of the world. In this verse, "Allah's reward" means the bounteous provision that is gained by man in the world and the Hereafter as a result of labour and toil undertaken within the bounds set by Allah; and "patience" means to have control over one's emotions and desires, to stick to honesty and righteousness as against greed and lust, to bear the losses that one may have to incur on account of the truth and justice, to spurn the gains that might accrue from employing unlawful devices, to remain content and satisfied with the lawful earning even if it is meagre and insufficient, to eschew feelings of envy and jealousy at the splendour of the corrupt people and avoid even casting a glance at it, and to be satisfied with the thought that for an honest man the colourless purity that Allah has granted him by His grace is better than the lustrous filth of evil and corruption. As for "fortune", it implies Allah's reward as well as the pure mentality by virtue of which a believing and righteous person finds it easier to suffer hunger and starvation than become a multi-millionaire by adopting dishonest and corrupt ways and means."

101. That is, "The extension or the restriction of provisions is always according to the will of Allah, and Allah's will is determined by

His own reasons and considerations. His favouring somebody with generous provisions does not necessarily mean that Allah is well pleased with him and is honouring him with gifts. Mostly it so happens that a person is under Allah's wrath, but He goes on favouring him with more and more wealth till, at last, the same wealth causes Allah's torment to descend on him. Contrary to this, if somebody is being given restricted provisions it does not necessarily mean that Allah is displeased with him and is punishing him. Mostly the righteous men live in hardship although they are Allah's favourites, and in many cases the same hardship becomes a cause of Allah's mercy for them. Consequently, a person who does not understand this reality looks with envious eyes at the prosperity of those who actually deserve Allah's wrath."

102. That is, "We had the misconception that worldly prosperity and wealth by themselves constituted real success. Therefore, we thought that Korah was highly successful, but now we have come to know that real success is an entirely different thing, and it is never attained by the disbelievers."

This moral of the story of Korah has been mentioned only in the Qur'ān. The Bible and the Talmud are without it. However, according to the details given in these looks, when the Israelites left Egypt, Korah also accompanied them along with his men, and then conspired against the Prophets Moses and Aaron and was joined in this by 250 of his followers. At last, Allah's wrath descended on him, and the earth opened up and swallowed him and his followers together with their possessions."

103. That is, Paradise which is the abode of real success.

104. "Who do not seek glory...": who are not desirous of establishing their own glory in God's earth: who do not live like rebels and tyrants and arrogant people but like humble servants: who do not seek to make God's servants their personal servants.

105. "Mischief" implies the chaos that inevitably appears in human life in consequence of violating the truth. Whatever man does when he disobeys Allah and turns away from His service is nothing but mischief. Partly this mischief occurs when wealth is amassed through unlawful means and expended in unlawful ways.

106. "The Godfearing": those who refrain from His disobedience.

107. That is, "He has placed on you the responsibility of conveying the Qur'ān and teaching it to the people, and reforming the world according to the guidance contained in it."

108. The word *ma'ād* in the original means the place to which one has to return ultimately. Its use as a common noun implies that it is a place of eminence and glory. Some commentators think it refers

to Paradise. But there is no reason why it should be restricted only to Paradise. Let it remain indefinite as Allah Himself has put it so that the promise becomes applicable both to this world and to the Next World. The context also requires that it should be looked upon as a promise to bestow the highest glory and eminence on the Holy Prophet ultimately not only in the Hereafter but in this world too. In the saying of the disbelievers of Makkah, which has been the theme of the discourse from verse 57 until now, they had said, "O Muḥammad (Allah's peace be upon him), do you want us also to be doomed with you? If we join you and adopt this Faith, it will become hard for us to live in Arabia." In response to this, Allah tells His Prophet: "O Muḥammad, that God Who has placed the burden of conveying the message of the Qur'ān on you, will not destroy you; rather He will exalt you to the rank which these people cannot even imagine today." And, in actual fact, in a few years after this, even in this world, Allah granted the Holy Prophet complete authority over the whole of Arabia, and there was no power to resist him, and no religion to stand its ground. There had been no precedent in the history of Arabia that the whole peninsula might have come under the sway of one man so completely that no opponent might be there to challenge him and no soul to dare disobey his orders. Then it was not only a political domination but religious too, for the whole population had been won over to Islam.

Some commentators opine that this verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ was sent down on the way during the Holy Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madīnah, and in this Allah had promised His Prophet that He would again bring him back to Makkah. But, firstly, the words of the verse do not allow that "*ma'ād*" be taken to mean "Makkah". Secondly, this Sūrah, both according to the traditions and the internal evidence of its theme, was revealed some time during the time of the migration to Ḥabash, and one cannot understand that if this verse was revealed after several years on the way during the migration to Madīnah, why was it inserted in this context without any relevance? Thirdly, in this context, the mention of the Holy Prophet's return to Makkah seems quite irrelevant. For if the verse is taken to mean this, it will not be a reply to the disbelievers' excuse but would rather strengthen it. It would mean this: "No doubt, what you say, O people of Makkah, is correct. Muḥammad will be expelled from this city, but he will not remain an exile for ever, but eventually We will bring him back to this very place." Though this tradition has been reported by Bukhārī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Jarīr and other traditionists on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, it is, in fact, Ibn 'Abbās's own opinion; it is not a tradition that might have been received direct from the Holy Prophet that one may have to accept it.

109. This thing is being presented as a proof of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad's Prophethood. Just as the Prophet Moses was wholly unaware that he was going to be appointed a Prophet, and sent on a grand mission—when he had never even expected or wished for such a thing, but had been suddenly called upon while on a journey and made a Prophet and assigned a mission which had no relevance with his previous life—so was precisely the case with the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him). The people of Makkah knew full well what kind of life he was leading till a day before the day when he came down from the Cave of Hīrā' with the message of Prophethood. They were fully aware of his occupations, of the topics of his conversation, of the nature of his interests and activities. No doubt it was a life which was an embodiment of truth, honesty and righteousness, a model of nobility, peacefulness, fulfilment of obligations and rights of others and of the service to humanity, but there was nothing in it which could give somebody any idea that the righteous man was going to make a claim to Prophethood the next day. There was no one among his most intimate friends and relations and neighbours, who could say that he had already been preparing to become a Prophet. No one had ever heard a word on the themes and problems and topics from him, which became the subject of his daily conversation all of a sudden after the revolutionary moment in the Cave of Hīrā'. No one had heard him employing the kind of diction and words and terms, which the people started hearing from him in the shape of the Qur'ān. He had never stood up for preaching, had never given a message or started a movement, and none of his activities had ever indicated that he was anxious to undertake a programme for the solution of the social problems or for religious or moral reformation. Till a day before this revolutionary moment he was leading the life of a trader, who earns his living by fair and lawful means, who lives a happy life with his family, receives his guests, helps the poor and treats his relatives well, and at times retires from society into seclusion for the sake of worship. For such a person it would be a great change if he started making, all of a sudden, world-moving orations, preaching a revolutionary message, producing a sublime literature and propounding an enduring philosophy of life and a profound system of thought and morality and social life. For psychologically too, such a change is not possible through any kind of preparation and conscious effort. Any such effort and preparation, in any case, has to pass through certain evolutionary stages, which cannot remain hidden from the people among whom a person is passing his life. Had the Holy Prophet's life passed through any such stages of gradual development, hundreds of the people in Makkah would have come out

to say, "Did we not tell you beforehand that this man would one day make a tall claim?" But history bears evidence that no one in Makkah ever made such an objection although the disbelievers of Makkah raised all sorts of other objections against the Holy Prophet.

Then another thing: the Holy Prophet himself never wished for or expected or awaited his appointment to prophethood, but he came across this experience all of a sudden quite unexpectedly. This is supported by the event that has been reported in the Traditions in connection with the beginning of Revelation. After his first meeting with the Angel Gabriel and the revelation of the initial verses of Sūrah Al-'Alaq he rushes back home from Ḥirā' trembling with fear, and says to his wife, "Cover me with a cloak! Cover me with a cloak!" After a while when he recovers a little from the state of anxiety, he relates what he had experienced to his wife and says, "I feel there is danger to my life!" She responds, "No, never! Allah will never bring you to grief: you render the rights of your kindred, you support the indigent, help the poor, treat your guests well, and are ever ready to contribute to a good cause." Then she takes him to Waraqa bin Naufal, who was her cousin and a righteous and knowledgeable person from among the people of the Book. Hearing from him what had happened, Waraqa says without any hesitation, "The one who came to you is the same *Nāmūs* (the specially appointed Divine Messenger), who used to come to Moses. I wish I were a young man and could live till the time when your people will expel you." The Holy Prophet asks, "Will my people expel me?" He replies, "Yes; no one has passed before, who brought the same thing that you have brought, and his people did not turn hostile to him."

This whole event depicts the state which a simple man will naturally undergo when he is confronted unexpectedly by a most extraordinary experience all of a sudden. If the Holy Prophet had already been anxious to become a prophet and thinking that a man like him ought to be a prophet, and had been meditating and straining his mind and awaiting the arrival of an angel with a message, he would have been filled with delight at the experience in the Cave, and descending from the mountain would have gone straight before his people and proclaimed Prophethood. But, quite to the contrary, he is confounded at what he had seen, reaches home trembling and lies in bed fully covered up. When he is composed a little, he tells his wife quietly what had happened in the solitude of the Cave, and expresses feelings of anxiety and insecurity. How different is this state from the state of a candidate for prophethood!

Then, who can be better aware of the husband's life, his ambitions and thoughts, than the wife? If she had perceived before-hand that the husband was a candidate for prophethood and had been anxiously

awaiting the arrival of the angel, her reply would have been different from what Ḥaḍrat Khadijah said. She would have answered, "Dear husband! Why are you so agitated? You have got what you have been longing since long. Now, flourish as a saint: I too shall get ready for collecting gifts and offerings." But on the basis of what she had seen of her husband during her 15-year-long companionship, she did not take more than a moment to understand that Satan could not have come to a righteous and selfless man like him, nor could Allah have put him to a severe test. Therefore, whatever he had seen was the very truth and reality.

The same is also true in the case of Waraqa bin Naufal. He was not an outsider, but a member of the Holy Prophet's own clan and a brother-in-law by a close relationship. Then being a knowledgeable Christian he could discriminate the prophethood and book and revelation from fabrication and fraud. Being the Holy Prophet's senior by many years his whole life since childhood had been spent before him. Therefore, when he heard what the Holy Prophet had to say about his experience in the Cave, he at once said that it was most surely the same Angel who used to bring Divine messages to the Prophet Moses. For in this case also precisely the same thing had happened as in the case of the Prophet Moses. He also was a pure and righteous person, simple in thought and without any pre-conceived notions about prophethood, and he also had experienced the same thing unexpectedly in full consciousness similarly. Therefore, without the least hesitation, he was led to the firm conclusion that there was no self-deception or satanic insinuation involved, but whatever the truthfulman had seen, without any will or desire on his own part, was in fact, an experience of the Reality.

This is such a clear proof of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad's Prophethood that a realistic person can hardly deny it. That is why it has been presented as a proof of Prophethood at several places in the Qur'ān. For example, in Sūrah Yūnus it has been said: "O Prophet, say to them: Had Allah willed so, I would never have recited this Qur'ān to you, nor would He have told you anything (about its existence). I have already lived a lifetime among you before its revelation. Do you not use common sense?" (v. 16) And in Sūrah Ash-Shūrā it has been said: "O Prophet, you did not know at all what was the Book and what was the Faith but We made that Revelation a light by which We show the way to any of Our servants We will." (v. 52) For further explanation, see E.N. 21 of Sūrah Yūnus, E.N.'s 88 to 92 of Al-'Ankabūt, and E.N. 84 of Ash-Shūrā.

110. That is, "When Allah has granted you this blessing without your asking for it, you are under an obligation to exercise all your

وقف لازم
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٤٦
١٢

تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۚ وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ كُلُّ
شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ ۗ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ۚ

87-88

And let it never happen that the unbelievers should divert you¹¹¹ from Allah's Revelations when they are sent down to you. Invite (the people) towards your Lord and do not join the *mushriks*, nor invoke any deity other than Allah. There is no deity but He. Everything is perishable except Himself: Sovereignty is His,¹¹² and to Him will all of you be returned.

energies and spend all your efforts in upholding it, conveying it to others and promoting its cause. Any slackness in this regard would mean that you helped the disbelievers. This does not mean that, God forbid, there was any chance of such slackness on the part of the Holy Prophet. Allah, in fact, is exhorting the Holy Prophet, as if to say, "You should go on doing your mission in spite of the disbelievers' opposition and their uproar, and do not at all mind what fears the enemies of the Truth express regarding your message's being harmful to their national interests."

111. "...divert you": divert you from conveying them to others and acting in accordance with them in practical life

112. Another meaning can be: "Sovereignty is for Him, for He alone is entitled to it by right."

XXIX

AL-'ANKABUT الْعَنْكَبُوت

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XXIX

AL-'ANKABŪT الْعَنْكَبُوتُ

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from verse 41 in which the word '*Ankabūt* (Spider) has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Verses 56 to 60 clearly show that this Sūrah was sent down a little before the migration to Ḥabash, and this is supported by the internal evidence of the subject-matter as well. Some commentators have opined that since it mentions the hypocrites, and hypocrisy appeared in Madīnah, the first ten verses of this Sūrah were revealed at Madīnah and the rest of it at Makkah; whereas the people whose hypocrisy has been mentioned here are those who had adopted a hypocritical way of life because they were afraid of the oppression and extreme physical torture to which the Muslims were being subjected by the disbelievers. Evidently, this kind of hypocrisy could be there only at Makkah and not at Madīnah. Similarly, some other commentators, seeing that in this Sūrah the Muslims have been exhorted to migrate, have regarded it as the last Sūrah to be revealed at Makkah, whereas the Muslims had migrated to Ḥabash even before their migration to Madīnah. These opinions are not based on any tradition but on the internal evidence of the subject-matter, and this

internal evidence, when considered against the subject-matter of the Sūrah as a whole, points to the conditions prevailing in the time of the migration to Ḥabash and not to the last stage at Makkah.

Theme and Subject-matter

A perusal of the Sūrah shows that the period of its revelation was the period of extreme persecution of the Muslims at Makkah. The disbelievers were opposing and fighting Islam tooth and nail and the new converts were being subjected to the severest oppression. Such were the conditions when Allah sent down this Sūrah to strengthen and encourage the sincere Muslims as well as to put to shame those who were showing weakness of the faith. Besides, the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened and warned not to invite for themselves the fate that the antagonists of the Truth have been experiencing in every age.

In this connection, the questions that some young men were facing in those days, have also been answered. For instance, their parents were urging them to abandon Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), and return to their ancestral religion, for they argued: "The Qur'ān in which you have put your faith, regards the rights of the parents as the uppermost; therefore, listen to what we say; otherwise you will be working against the dictates of your own Faith." This has been answered in verse 8.

Similarly, the people of some clans said to the new converts to Islam, "Leave the question of punishments, etc., to us. Listen to us and abandon this man. If God seizes you in the Hereafter, we will come forward and say, 'Lord, these people are innocent: we had forced them to give up the Faith; therefore, seize us'." This has been dealt with in vv. 12-13.

The stories mentioned in this Sūrah also impress the same point mostly, as if to say, "Look at the Prophets of the

past: they were made to suffer great hardships and were treated cruelly for long periods. Then, at last they were helped by Allah. Therefore, take heart: Allah's succour will certainly come. But a period of trial and tribulation has to be undergone." Besides teaching this lesson to the Muslims, the disbelievers also have been warned, as if to say, "If you are not being immediately seized by Allah, you should not form the wrong impression that you will never be seized. The signs of the doomed nations of the past are before you. Just see how they met their doom and how Allah succoured the Prophets."

Then the Muslims have been instructed to the effect: "If you feel that the persecution has become unbearable for you, you should give up your homes, instead of giving up your Faith: Allah's earth is vast: seek a new place where you can worship Allah with the full peace of mind."

Besides all this, the disbelievers also have been urged to understand Islam. The realities of *Tauhīd* and the Hereafter have been impressed with rational arguments, *shirk* has been refuted, and drawing their attention towards the Signs in the universe, they have been told that all these Signs confirm the teachings that the Prophet is presenting before them.



الَّذِينَ أَحْسَبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَ
 لَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ
 الْكٰذِبِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا ۗ سَاءَ مَا
 يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ ۗ وَهُوَ
 السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ
 عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ
 وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ
 حُسْنًا ۖ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ۖ إِلَىٰ
 ٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ ۖ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
 لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا
 أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلَئِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ
 رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ ۗ أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾
 وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلنَحْمِلْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ ۗ وَمَا هُمْ بِحَامِلِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾
 خَطِيئَتِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ إِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَلَيَحْمِلُنَّ أَثْقَالَهُمْ ۗ وَأَنْتَ لَا تَمَعُ

XXIX

AL-'ANKABUT الْعَنْكَبُوت

Verses: 69

Revealed at Makkah

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

Alif. Lām. Mīm. Do the people think that they will be left alone after they have once said, "We have believed," and they will not be tested?¹ The fact is that we have put to the test all those who have gone before them.² Surely, Allah has to see³ who are the truthful and who the liars.

And do those who are committing evil deeds⁴ reckon that they will outstrip Us?⁵ Evil is their judgement.

Whoever expects to meet Allah (should know that) Allah's appointed time is about to come,⁶ and Allah hears everything and knows everything.⁷ Whoever will exert will exert for his own good:⁸ Allah is certainly Independent of all His creations.⁹ As for those who believe and do good works, We shall wipe off their evils and reward them for the best of their deeds.¹⁰

We have enjoined man to do good to his parents, but if they force you to associate with Me another (deity) whom you do not know (as such), you should not obey them.¹¹ You have all to return to Me: then I shall tell you what you had been doing.¹² And those who will have believed and done good deeds, We shall certainly include them among the righteous.

There is among the people such a one, who says, "We have believed in Allah", but when he was persecuted in the cause of Allah, he deemed the persecution by the

people as the punishment of Allah.¹⁴ Now if there comes help and victory from your Lord, the same person will say, "We were with you".¹⁵ Is not Allah fully aware of what is in the hearts of the people of the world? And surely Allah has to see who are the believers and who the hypocrites.¹⁶

12-13

The disbelievers say to the believers, "Follow our way and we will bear (the burden of) your sins",¹⁷ whereas they will not bear (the burden of) your sins:¹⁸ they are utter liars. Of course, they shall bear their own burdens as well as many other burdens in addition to their own.¹⁹ And on the Day of Resurrection, they will surely be questioned about their scandal-mongering.²⁰

1. When this thing was said, the conditions prevailing in Makkah were extremely trying. Whoever accepted Islam was made a target of tyranny and humiliation and persecution. If he was a slave or a poor person, he was beaten and subjected to unbearable tortures; if he was a shopkeeper or artisan, he was made to suffer economic hardships, even starvation; if he was a member of an influential family, his own people would tease and harass him in different ways and make life difficult for him. This had created an atmosphere of fear and fright in Makkah, due to which most people were afraid of believing in the Holy Prophet although they acknowledged him to be a true Prophet in their hearts; and some others who believed would lose heart soon afterwards and would submit and yield to the disbelievers when they confronted dreadful persecutions. Though these trying circumstances could not shake the determination of the strong-willed Companions, naturally they also were sometimes overwhelmed by an intense feeling of anxiety and distraction. An instance of this is found in the tradition of Ḥaḍrat Khabbāb bin Arat, which has been related by Bukhārī, Abū Da'ūd and Nasā'ī. He says, "During the time when we had become sick of our persecution by the *mushriks*, one day I saw the Holy Prophet sitting in the shade of the wall of the Ka'bah. I went up to him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, don't you pray for us!' Hearing this his face became red with feeling and emotion, and he said, 'The believers who have gone before you had been subjected to even greater persecutions. Some one of them was made to sit in a ditch in the earth and was sawed into two pieces from head to foot. Someone's joints were rubbed with iron-combs so as to withhold him from the Faith. By God, this Mission will

be accomplished and the time is not far when a person will travel without apprehension from Ṣan'ā' to Ḥaḍramaut and there will be none but Allah Whom he will fear."

In order to change this state of agitation into forbearance, Allah tells the believers, "No one can become worthy of Our promises of success in the world and the Hereafter merely by verbal profession of the Faith, but every claimant to the Faith will have to pass through trials and tribulations so as to furnish proof of the truth of his claim. Our Paradise is not so cheap, nor Our special favours in the world so low-priced, that We should bless you with all these as soon as you proclaim verbal faith in Us. The trial is a pre-requisite for them. You will have to undergo hardships for Our sake, suffer losses of life and property, face dangers, misfortunes and difficulties; you will be tried both with fear and with greed; you will have to sacrifice everything that you hold dear for Our pleasure, and bear every discomfort in Our way. Then only will it become manifest whether your claim to faith in Us was true or false. This thing has been said at every such place in the Qur'ān where the Muslims have been found placed in hardships and difficulties and obsessed by fear and consternation. In the initial stage of life at Madīnah, after the migration, when the Muslims were in great trouble on account of economic hardships, external dangers and internal villainy of the Jews and the hypocrites, Allah said:

"Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing such trials as were experienced by the believers before you? They met with adversity and affliction and were so shaken by trials that the Prophet of the time and his followers cried out, 'When will Allah's help come?' (Then only they were comforted with the good tidings:) 'Yes, Allah's help is near!' " (Al-Baqarah: 214).

Likewise, when after the Battle of Uḥud, the Muslims again confronted a period of afflictions, it was said:

"Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing any trial? whereas Allah has not yet tried you to see who among you are ready to lay down your lives in His way and who will show fortitude for His sake." (Āl-i-'Imrān: 142).

Almost the same thing has been said in Āl-i-'Imrān: 179, Taubah: 16 and Sūrah Muḥammad: 31. Allah in these verses has impressed on the Muslims that trial is the touchstone by which the pure and the impure are judged. The impure is turned aside by Allah and the pure is selected so that Allah may honour them with His favours which the sincere believers only deserve

2. That is, "This is not a new thing which you alone may be experiencing. The same has been happening before also. Whoever made a

claim to the Faith was made to pass through trials and tribulations. And when the others were not given anything without the trial, you are in no way any special people that you should be favoured and rewarded merely on verbal profession of the Faith."

3. Literally, "It is necessary that Allah should find out." A question may be asked: "When Allah already knows the truth of the truthful and the untruth of the liar, why should He put the people to the test for the sake of these?" The answer is: Until a person has manifested his potential and capability to do a thing in practical terms, justice requires that he neither deserves any rewards nor any punishment. One man, for example, is capable of being trustworthy and another man of being un-trustworthy. Unless both are tried and one manifests trustworthiness and the other the lack of it practically, it will not be justice on the part of Allah that He should reward one for trustworthiness and punish the other for the lack of it only on the basis of His knowledge of the unseen. Therefore the knowledge Allah already possesses about the capabilities of the people and about their conduct in the future is not enough to satisfy the requirements of justice until the people have manifested their potentialities in practical ways. Justice with Allah is not based on the knowledge that a person possesses a tendency to steal and will commit a theft, but on the knowledge that he has actually committed a theft. Likewise, Allah does not bestow favours and rewards on the basis of the knowledge that a person has the potential and capability to become a great believer and fighter in His way, but on the basis of the knowledge that the person concerned has practically proved by deed and action that he is a sincere believer and a brave fighter in His way. That is why we have translated the words of the verse as: "Allah has to see..."

4. This may refer to all those people who disobey Allah's Commands but here particularly it implies those wicked chiefs of the Quraish, who were in the forefront in their antagonism to Islam and persecution of the converts to Islam, e.g. Walīd bin Mughīrah, Abū Jahl, 'Utbah, Shaibah, 'Uqbah bin Abī Mu'ait, Ḥanzalah bin Wā'il, etc. Here the context itself requires that after exhorting the Muslims to patience and fortitude against the trials and tests, those people also should be chided and scolded, who were persecuting the believers."

5. It may also mean: "...that they will escape Our grasp." The words *yasbiqūnā* in the original may have two meanings: (1) "Whatever We will (i.e. the success of the mission of Our Messenger) should meet with failure, and whatever they wish (i.e. to frustrate the mission of Our Messenger) should be accomplished;" and (2) "We may want to seize them for their excesses and they should be able to escape and get

out of Our reach.”

6. That is, “The case of the one who does not believe in the life hereafter and thinks he is answerable to none for his deeds and there is no accountability whatever, is different. He may remain heedless and act as he likes, for he will himself see the consequences when they appear against his expectations. But those who expect that they have to meet their Lord one day and rewarded and punished according to their deeds, should not have the misunderstanding that the time of death is yet far off. They should rather think that it is near at hand and the respite for action is about to come to an end. Therefore, whatever they can do for their well-being in the Hereafter, they should do. They should not delay self-reform on account of the baseless belief that they have yet to live a long life.”

7. That is, “That God before Whom they will appear to render their accounts is not uninformed. He hears everything and knows everything, and nothing about them is hidden from Him.”

8. The word *mujāhadah* means to struggle and exert one's utmost against an opponent, and when the particular opponent force is not pointed out, the word implies an all-out, many-sided struggle. The struggle that a believer has to make in the world, is of this very nature. He has to fight against Satan, who frightens him every moment of the possible losses he may have to incur for the sake of good and allures him with the benefits and pleasures of the evil. He has to fight his own self also, which exerts to make him the slave of its lusts. He has also to fight all those men, from home to the world outside, whose ideology, trends, morality, custom, way of life and social and economic principles may be in conflict with his Faith; and he has to fight that state too, which enforces its laws independent of obedience to Allah, and employs its forces to promote evil instead of the good. This struggle is not of a day or two, but of a lifetime, of every moment of the day and night. And it is not a struggle in one field only but on every front of life. It is about this that Hadrat Hasan Baṣri has said: “Man exerts in the way of Allah even though he may not strike one sword at any time.”

9. That is, “Allah is not asking you to exert your utmost because He stands in need of any help from you to establish His Godhead and keep it established and sustained. But He instructs you to enter this conflict because this opens the way to your own progress. Through this way only you can get rid of the evil and follow the way of truth; through this way alone you can develop the ability and power to rise as the standard-bearers of goodness in the world and become worthy of Allah's Paradise in the Hereafter. By waging this war you will not do any favour to Allah, but will be only helping your own selves.”

10. *Imān* means to believe in and accept sincerely all those things to which the Messenger of Allah and this Book invite; and "good works" are those which are performed in accordance with the guidance of Allah and His Messenger. The good work of the heart and mind is that man's thinking and his ideas and his intentions should be right and pure. The good work of the tongue is that man should refrain from talking evil things, and whatever he says should be just and right and true; and the good work of the limbs is that man's entire life should be spent in Allah's worship and in obedience to His Commands and Law. Two results of the belief and righteous deeds have been mentioned: (1) That man's evils will be wiped off; and (2) that he will be rewarded for the best of his deeds better than what he will actually deserve.

Wiping off of evils means several things: (1) All kinds of sins that man might have committed before his affirmation of the Faith will be pardoned as soon as he believes; (2) the errors that man might have committed after the affirmation of the faith due to human weakness, but not because of a rebellious attitude, will be overlooked in view of his good deeds; (3) man's self-reform will automatically take place when he adopts a life of belief and righteousness, and most of his weaknesses will be removed from him.

The sentence, "We shall reward them for the best of their deeds", has two meanings: (1) Man will be given his rewards on the basis of the best of his deeds; and (2) he will be rewarded better and more handsomely than what he will actually deserve for his deeds. This thing has been stated at other places also in the Qur'ān. For instance, in Sūrah Al-An'ām : 160, it has been said: "He who will bring a good deed before Allah, will receive a tenfold reward for it", and in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ : 4 : "Whoever brings a good deed, shall have a better reward than that", and in Sūrah An-Nisā : 40 : "Indeed Allah does not wrong anyone even by a jot: if one does a good deed, He increases it manifold."

11. According to Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Abū Dā'ūd and Nasā'ī, this verse was sent down in respect of Ḥaḍrat Sa'd bin Abī Waqqās. He was 18 or 19 years old when he embraced Islam. When his mother, Hamnah, daughter of Sufyān bin Umayyah (neice of Abū Sufyān), came to know that her son had become a Muslim, she said, "I will neither eat nor drink nor sit in shade unless you disown Muḥammad. The rights of the mother are supermost even according to Allah's Command. Therefore if you disobey me, you will be disobeying Allah too." Ḥaḍrat Sa'd was perplexed and came before the Holy Prophet and told his whole story. At this, this verse was revealed. Possibly

other young men who embraced Islam in the initial stage at Makkah were also confronted with similar situations. Therefore, the same theme has been repeated forcefully in Sūrah Luqmān : 15 also.

What the verse means to impress is this: The rights of the parents, among the creation of Allah, are to be held as the supreme, but even if the parents force a person to adopt *shirk*, they should not be obeyed. The words, "If the both of them force you to associate..." imply that a lesser pressure, or a pressure by either of them, deserves to be set aside much more promptly. The next sentence, "... whom you do not know (as such)," is also noteworthy. This gives a sound reason for not obeying the parents in this regard. The parents certainly have the right that the children should serve them, respect them, and obey them in lawful things. But they do not have the right that one should obey them blindly against one's knowledge of the reality. Therefore, there is no reason why a person should go on following his parents' religion just because it is their religion. If the children come to know that their parents are following a false religion, they should give it up and adopt the right religion, and should not follow the wrong way whose falsehood has become clear to them even if the parents use every kind of pressure for it. When this is so in the case of even the parents, it should be so with every other person, too. No one deserves to be followed and obeyed unless one is sure that the person being followed is on the right path.

12. That is, "The relationships of the world and their obligations are confined to the world. At last, the parents as well as the children have to return to their Creator, and before Him everybody will be held answerable only on the basis of his personal responsibility. If the parents have misled the children, they will be called to account. If the children have accepted deviation for the sake of the parents, they will be punished. And if the children adopted the right way, and showed no slackness in rendering the parents' lawful rights either, but the parents ill-treated them only for the reason that they did not join them in their deviation, they will not be able to escape Allah's punishment."

13. Though the speaker is a single person, he uses the plural pronoun and says, "We have believed." Imām Rāzī has pointed out a subtle point in it. He says that the hypocrite always tries to be counted among the believers and mentions his faith as though he is also a true believer like others. His case is like that of a cowardly soldier who accompanies an army to the battlefield where the soldiers have fought well and put the enemy to rout. This cowardly person might

have made no contribution at all, but when he returns home, he will say, "We put up a good fight and routed the enemy", as if he was one of the heroes of the battlefield.

14. That is, "Just as one should desist from disbelief and sin due to fear of Allah's punishment, so did this man desist from faith and goodness due to fear of persecution by the people. When after belief he was confronted with threats and imprisonment and harsh treatment from the disbelievers, he thought that Allah's punishment in Hell which he will have to suffer after death in consequence of his disbelief, will be no severer than that. Therefore, he decided that he would suffer the torment of the Next World at its own time, but should give up faith and rejoin the disbelievers so that he might save himself from the torment of this world and pass an easy life."

15. That is, "Today he has joined the disbelievers in order to save his skin, and has abandoned the believers for he is not prepared even to suffer a thorn-prick in the cause of promoting Allah's religion, but when Allah will favour with success and victory those who are struggling in His cause with their lives and properties, this person will come forward to have his share of the fruits of the victory and will tell the Muslims, "Our hearts were with you: we used to pray for your success: we thought very highly of your devotion to duty and your sacrifices."

Here, one should understand that in case of an unbearable persecution and loss and extreme fear, one is permitted to disown Islam and save one's life, provided that one remains firm in one's faith with a sincere heart. But there is a big difference between the sincere Muslim who disowns Islam under compulsion in order to save his life and the time-server who ideologically believes in Islam as a true religion but joins the disbelievers when he sees the dangers and risks involved in the life of Faith. Apparently, they do not seem to be much different from each other, but the thing which sets them poles apart is this: The sincere Muslim who utters disbelief under compulsion not only remains attached to Islam ideologically, but practically also his sympathies remain with Islam and the Muslims; he feels happy over their successes and unhappy at their defeat. Even under compulsion he tries to avail himself of every opportunity to cooperate with the Muslims, and remains on the look-out for a chance to join his brethren-in-faith as soon as the grip of the enemies loosens a little. Contrary to this, when the time-server finds that the way of the Faith is difficult to follow and calculates carefully that the disadvantages of siding with Islam outweigh the advantages of re-joining the disbelievers, he turns away from Islam and the Muslims for the sake of personal safety and

worldly gains, establishes friendship with the disbelievers and is prepared to carry out for his own interests any service for them, which may be utterly opposed to the Faith and harmful to the Muslims. But at the same time, he does not close his eyes to the possibility that Islam also might prosper some time in the future. Therefore, whenever he gets an opportunity to talk to the Muslims, he acknowledges their ideology and admits his faith and pays homage to their sacrifices most generously, so that his verbal admissions might be helpful as and when required. At another place in the Qur'ān this same bargaining mentality of the hypocrites has been described, thus: "The hypocrites are watching you closely to see (how the wind blows). If victory comes to you from Allah, they will say to you, 'Were we not with you?' And if the disbelievers gain the upper hand, they will say to them, 'Were we not strong enough to fight against you? Yet we defended you from the Muslims'." (An-Nisā': 141).

16. That is, "Allah provides occasions for the trial again and again so that the faith of the believers and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites become manifest, and whatever is hidden in the hearts becomes exposed. The same thing has been said in Āl-i-'Imrān: 179: "Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which you happen to be at present: He will surely separate the pure from the impure people."

17. What they meant to say was this: "In the first place, the talk about life hereafter and Resurrection and accountability is all meaningless. But supposing there is another life in which the people will be called to account for their deeds, we take the responsibility that we shall take the punishment, etc. on our own selves. You should, therefore, listen to us and give up this new Faith and return to your ancestral religion." According to the traditions several chiefs of the Quraish used to counsel thus the people who embraced Islam in the beginning. So, when Hadrat 'Umar accepted Islam, Abū Sufyān and Harab bin Umayyah bin Khalaf met him and said these very things."

18. That is, "It is not at all possible that a person should take the responsibility for another before Allah, and thus enable the actual sinner to escape the punishment of his sin, for every person will be responsible for his own deeds there. "No bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another." (An-Najm: 38) But if at all it be so, none will have the nerve, in face of the blazing Hell got ready to punish the disbelievers, to say to Allah, only for the sake of honouring his pledge in the world, "Lord, forgive this person and send him to Paradise: he had turned apostate on my counselling: I offer myself to suffer the punishment for my own disbelief as well as

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أَتَقَالِيهِمْ ۖ وَكَيَسَّرْنَا^١ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ۗ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا^{١٣}
 نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ
 الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ۗ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً
 لِلْعَالَمِينَ ۗ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۗ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ
 لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ
 إِفْكًا ۗ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۗ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ۗ وَإِنْ تَكْذِبُوا
 فَقَدْ كَذَّبَا أُمْرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ۗ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ۗ أَوَلَمْ
 أَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۗ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ۗ
 قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ
 الْآخِرَةَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۗ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ
 يَشَاءُ ۗ وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ
 وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ
 اللَّهِ وَرِزْقِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَسُؤُوا مِنْ رَّحْمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۗ
 فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ
 مِنَ النَّارِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۗ وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ
 دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا لَا مَوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ
 بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۗ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ۗ وَمَأْوِكُمُ النَّارُ ۗ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ
 نَّصِيرِينَ ۗ فَأَمَّنْ لَهُ لُوطٌ ۗ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ

We sent Noah to his people²¹ and he lived among them for a thousand years save fifty.²² Consequently, the Flood overtook them while they persisted in wickedness.²³ Then We rescued Noah and those in the Ark²⁴ and made it an object of warning for the people of the world.²⁵ 14-15

And (We) sent Abraham,²⁶ when he said to his people, "Worship Allah and fear Him:²⁷ this is better for you only if you know it. Those whom you worship instead of Allah are mere idols, and you are forging a lie.²⁸ In fact, those whom you worship, besides Allah, have no power to give you any sustenance. Ask Allah for sustenance, and worship Him alone and be grateful to Him, for to Him you will be returned.²⁹ And if you deny, many a nation before you also has denied (the Truth)³⁰; and the Messenger's only responsibility is to convey the message clearly. 16-18

Have³¹ these people never seen how Allah originates the creation, and then repeats it? Surely this (repetition) is easier for Allah.³² Say to them, "Go about in the earth and see how He has begun the creation; then Allah will recreate life: surely Allah has power over everything.³³ He may punish whom He wills and show mercy to whom He wills; to Him you shall be turned back. You can neither make (Him) helpless in the earth nor in the heaven,³⁴ and you have no patron and helper to save you from Allah.³⁵ Those who have denied Allah's Revelations and their meeting with Him, have despaired of My Mercy,³⁶ and they will have a painful punishment. 19-23

Then³⁷ the only answer his people gave was to say, "Kill him or burn him."³⁸ At last, Allah saved him from the fire;³⁹ surely in this there are Signs for those who believe.⁴⁰ He said,⁴¹ "Here in the worldly life you have made the idols, instead of Allah, a means of love among yourselves,⁴² but on the Day of Resurrection, you will disown and curse one another.⁴³ Fire will be your abode and you shall have no helper." Then Lot believed in him,⁴⁴ and Abraham said, "I shall migrate towards my Lord:⁴⁵ 24-26

He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."⁴⁶

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for his in Hell."

19. That is, "Though they will not bear the burdens of others, they will neither escape bearing a double burden: one burden of their own selves going astray, and the burden of leading the others astray." This can be understood by an example. A person commits theft and also asks another person to join him in this. Now if the other person also commits theft, no judge will let him off only because he had committed the offence on someone else's prompting. He will in any case be punished for the theft and it will not be fair according to any law of justice to let him off and punish instead of him the first thief who had prompted him to commit the theft. However, the first thief will suffer punishment for two offences: the offence of committing theft himself and the offence of turning another person into a thief along with himself. This principle has been stated at another place in the Qur'ān thus: "...so that they should bear the full brunt of their own burdens on the Day of Resurrection together with some of the burdens of those whom they are leading astray in their ignorance." (An-Nahl: 25) The same principle has been elucidated by the Holy Prophet in this *Hadīth*: "Whoever invited others to the right path will be granted a reward equal to the rewards of all those who listened to him and adopted the right path, without diminishing their rewards in any way. And whoever invited others to deviation will earn a sin equal to the sins of all those who followed him, without diminishing their sins in any way."

20. "Scandal-mongering" implies all those untruths which were hidden in this saying of the disbelievers: "Follow our way and we will bear the burden of your sins." In fact, they said this on the basis of two presumptions: (1) The creed of *shirk* they are following is based on the truth and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad's doctrine of *Tauḥīd* is false; therefore, there is nothing wrong if it is rejected; and (2) there is going to be no Resurrection, and the doctrine of the Hereafter which deters a Muslim from unbelief is baseless. With these presumptions they would counsel a Muslim, saying, "Well, if you think that disbelief is really a sin, and there is going to be Resurrection when you will be called to account for this sin, then we are ready to take this sin of yours on our selves. You leave it to us and give up the religion of Muḥammad and return to your ancestral religion." In this two other false things were also included: (a) Their belief that a person who commits an offence on someone

else's prompting can be exempted from its responsibility, and the whole responsibility can be assumed by the one who had prompted the commission of the offence; and (b) their false promise that on the Day of Resurrection they will certainly assume the responsibility for those who might have turned apostates on their counselling. For when Resurrection will actually be established, and they will see Hell against their expectations, they will never be prepared to receive the punishment of their own disbelief as well as bear the whole burden of the sins of those others whom they had deceived and misled in the world.

21. For comparison, see Āl-i-'Imrān: 33-34, An-Nisā': 163, Al-An'ām: 84, Al-A'rāf: 59-64, Yūnus: 71-73, Hūd: 25-48, Al-Anbiyā': 76-77, Al-Mu'minūn: 23-30, Al-Furqān: 37, Ash-Shu'arā': 105-123, Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 75-82, Al-Qamar: 9-15, Al-Ḥāqqah: 11-12, Nūḥ (the whole of it).

One should keep the initial verses of the Sūrah in view in order to understand the relevancy of these stories in this context. There, on the one hand, it has been said to the believers, "We have put to the test all those believers who have passed before you", and, on the other, the wicked disbelievers have been warned to the effect: "You should not have the misunderstanding that you will outstrip Us and escape Our grasp." It is to impress these two things that these historical events are being related here.

22. This does not mean that the Prophet Noah lived for 950 years, but it means that after his appointment to Prophethood till the coming of the Flood, he went on making efforts for 950 years for the reformation of his wicked people, and he did not lose heart even though he suffered persecutions for such a long time. The same is the aim of the discourse here. The believers are being told: "You have been suffering persecutions and experiencing stubbornness of your wicked opponents hardly for six years or so. Just imagine the patience and resolution and firmness of Our servant who braved such afflictions and hardships continuously for nine and a half centuries."

The Qur'ān and the Bible differ about the age of the Prophet Noah. The Bible says that he lived for 950 years. He was 600 years old when the Flood came, and lived for another 350 years after the Flood. (Gen. 7: 6 and 9: 28-29). But according to the Qur'ān, he must have lived for at least a thousand years, because 950 years is the time that he spent in preaching his mission after his appointment to Prophethood till the coming of the Flood. Evidently, he must have been appointed to Prophethood after he had attained his maturity, and must have lived some life after the Flood also.

For some people such a long life is inconceivable. But in this world of God strange happenings are not rare. Wherever one may look one will see extraordinary manifestations of His power. The occurrence of certain events and things in a usual form and manner is no proof that the event or thing cannot happen in an unusual and extraordinary way. To break these assumptions there exists a long list of unusual events and things that have taken place in every kind of creation in every part of the universe. In particular, the person who has a clear concept of God's being All-Powerful, cannot be involved in the misunderstanding that it is not possible for God, Who is the Creator of life and death, to grant a life of a thousand years or so to any man. The fact is that man of his own will and wish cannot live even for a moment, but if Allah wills, He can make him live for as long as He pleases.

23. That is, the Flood came when they still persisted in their wickedness. Had they desisted from it before the coming of the Flood Allah would not have sent this torment on them.

24. That is, the people who had believed in Noah, and who had been permitted by Allah to board the Ark. This has been elucidated in Sūrah Hūd : 40, thus: "Until when Our Command came to pass and *at-Tannūr* began to boil up, We said, '(O Noah), take into Ark a pair from every species, and embark your own people—save those who have already been specifically marked—and also those who have believed; and those who had believed with Noah were only a few."

25. It can also mean this: "We made this dreadful punishment or this great event a Sign of warning for the later generations." But from the way this has been mentioned here and in Sūrah Qamar, it appears that the object of warning was the Ark itself, which remained on the top of the mountain for centuries and continued to remind the later generations that a Flood of such magnitude had once come in that land because of which the Ark had risen up to rest on the mountain. In Sūrah Qamar : 13-15, it has been said: "And We bore Noah upon a thing (Ark) made of planks and nails, which floated under Our care. This was a vengeance for the sake of him who had been slighted. And We left that Ark as a Sign. Then, is there any who would take admonition?"

In his commentary on this verse of Sūrah Qamar, Ibn Jarīr says on the authority of Qatādah that during the period of the Companions when the Muslims went to the land of al-Jazīrah, they saw the Ark on mount Jūdī (according to another tradition, near the habitation of Bāqirwā). In the modern times also news appear from time to time in the papers that expeditions are being sent to search out the boat, because something resembling a boat has been sighted many a time

from aeroplanes during flights over Mount Ararat. (For further details, see E.N. 47 of Al-A'rāf and E.N. 46 of Hūd).

26. For comparison, see Al-Baqarah: 122-141, 258-260; Āl-i-'Imrān: 64-71; Al-An'ām: 71-82; Hūd: 69-83; Ibrāhīm : 35-41; Al-Hijr : 45-60; Maryam : 41-50; Al-Anbiyāā : 51-75 ; Ash-Shu'arāā : 69-104; A-Şāffāt: 75-113; Az-Zukhruf : 26-35 ; Adh-Dhāriyāt : 24-46.

27. That is, "Fear disobeying Him and associating others with Him."

28. That is, "You are not forging idols but a lie. These idols are in themselves a lie. Then your beliefs that they are gods and goddesses, or they are incarnation of God, or His offspring, or His favourites, or intercessors with Him, or that someone of them is bestower of health, or giver of children or jobs, are all lies, which you have invented from your own whims and conjecture. The fact is that they are in no way more than idols—lifeless, powerless and impotent.

29. In these few sentences the Prophet Abraham has put together all rational arguments against idol-worship. There must necessarily be some reason for making somebody or something a deity. One such reason can be that somebody should be entitled to being a deity due to some personal excellence. Another, that he should be the creator of man, and man should be indebted to him for his existence. Third, that he should be responsible for man's sustenance, his food and other means of life. Fourth, that man's future should be linked up with his support and bounty, and man may be afraid that annoying him would mean bringing about his own ruin. The Prophet Abraham said that none of these four things favoured idol-worship, but they all favoured and demanded pure God-worship. Saying that they are mere idols, he demolished the first argument, for a mere idol could have no excellence to entitle it to be a deity. Then, by saying that "you are their creator", he refuted the second argument, and "they have no power to give you any sustenance" destroyed the third reason. Lastly, he said, "You have to return to Allah ultimately" and not to the idols; therefore, it was not in their power to make or mar your destiny, but in the power of God alone. Thus, after a complete refutation of *shirk*, the Prophet Abraham made it clear to them that all the reasons for which man could regard somebody as a deity only applied to Allah, Who alone should be worshipped without associating anyone else with him.

30. That is, "If you reject my invitation to *Tauhīd* and deny my message that you have to return to your Lord and render an account of your deeds, it will not be a new thing. In the history of mankind many Prophets—like Noah, Hūd, Şāliḥ (on whom be Allah's peace)—

before also have brought the same teachings, and their peoples denied them likewise. Now you may judge for yourselves as to whether they harmed the Prophets or only themselves”.

31. From here to the end of verse 23 is a parenthesis, which has been interposed in the story of the Prophet Abraham and addressed to the disbelievers of Makkah. The relevance of this interposition in the story, which is being related for the admonition of the disbelievers, is that they were basically involved in two kinds of deviation: *shirk* and idol-worship, and the denial of the Hereafter. The first of these has been refuted in the Prophet Abraham's speech as related above. Now the second is being refuted in these few sentences by Allah Himself.

32. That is, “On the one hand, countless new things come into existence from non-existence, and on the other, similar new members continue coming into existence to take the place of the dying members of every species. The polytheists acknowledged that that was all due to Allah's power of creation and invention. They never denied Allah's being a Creator, just as the polytheists of today do not do. Therefore, the argument has been based upon what they themselves acknowledged as a reality, as if to say, “How do you think that that God, Who, according to your own belief, brings things into existence from non-existence, and does not create things just once, but goes on bringing into existence similar things in place of the dying things repeatedly in front of your very eyes, will not be able to raise you back to life after death?” (For further explanation, see E.N. 80 of Sūrah An-Naml).

33. That is, “When you yourselves are witnessing things being created in the first instance by God's competence and skill, you should understand it well that re-creation shall also take place by the same competence and skill. Such a thing is not beyond His power nor can it be.”

34. That is, “You cannot escape Allah's grasp wherever you may flee. Whether you descend into the depths of the earth or climb into the heights of the sky, you will be apprehended in any case and brought before your Lord.” The same thing has been said in Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān as a challenge to the jinns and mankind: “O company of jinns and men! If you have the power to escape across the bounds of the earth and heavens, then do escape! You shall not escape, for it requires a great power.” (v. 33).

35. That is, “Neither you yourselves have the power that you should escape Allah's grasp, nor is any of your guardians or patrons or supporters so powerful that he should give you refuge against

Allah and save you from His punishment. None in the entire universe can dare rise as a supporter of those who have committed *shirk* and disbelief, who have refused to submit before Divine Commands, who have dared disobey Allah impudently, and raised storms of wickedness and mischief on His earth; and withhold enforcement of the Divine decree of torment against them, or have the nerve to say in God's Court: "They are my followers: therefore, whatever they might have done should be forgiven them."

36. That is, "They have no share in My mercy, and they should entertain no hope whatever of getting any share of My mercy. When they denied the Revelations of Allah, they themselves gave up their right to benefit by the promises Allah has made to the believers. Then, when they have denied the Hereafter and do not at all believe that one Day they will have to stand before their God, it only means that they cherish no hope at all of Allah's pardon and forgiveness. After this when they will open their eyes in the Hereafter, against their expectations, and will also see the truth of those Signs of Allah, which they had denied, there is no reason why they should expect to receive any share from Allah's mercy."

37. From here the discourse again turns to the story of the Prophet Abraham.

38. That is, they had no answer to the Prophet Abraham's rational arguments. The only answer they gave was: "Cut off the tongue that talks the truth and let not the person live, who points out our error and tells us to give it up." The words, "Kill him or burn him", indicate that the whole crowd was unanimous that the Prophet Abraham should be put to death. However, they differed about the method. Some said that he should be killed, and others said that he should be burnt alive, so that no one in future should dare say the sort of the thing he said.

39. This sentence by itself shows that they had at last decided to burn the Prophet Abraham and he was cast into the fire. Here it has only been said that Allah saved him from the fire; but in Sūrah Al-Anbiyāā it has been elucidated that Allah commanded: "O fire! Be cool and become safe for Abraham!" (v. 69) Evidently, if he was not at all cast into the fire, the Command to the fire to become cool and safe would be meaningless. This proves that properties of all things are dependent on Allah's Command and whenever He pleases He can change the property of anything He likes. Normally fire burns and every combustible thing catches fire. But this property of the fire is

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الْحَكِيمِ ۗ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ
 وَاتَيْنَاهُ آجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۗ وَلَوْطًا إِذْ
 قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ
 الْعَالَمِينَ ۗ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ۗ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ
 الْمُنْكَرَ ۗ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ۗ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۗ وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ
 رُسُلَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَىٰ قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ إِنَّا أَهْلُهَا
 كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ۗ قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيهَا فَفَعَلْنَا
 لِنُجِيتَهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ ۗ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ۗ وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ
 رُسُلَنَا لُوطًا سَيِّئًا بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ
 إِنَّا مُنْجُونَكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ ۗ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ۗ إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ
 أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ۗ وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا
 مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ۗ وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۗ قَالَ
 يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۗ
 فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جثيمين ۗ وَأَوْعَادًا وَ
 شُودًا وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ ۗ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ
 فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ۗ وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَ
 هَامَانَ ۗ وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُّوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا
 سَاقِينَ ۗ فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنبِهِ ۗ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا ۗ وَ

And We bestowed on him (children like) Isaac and Jacob,⁴⁷ and placed in his progeny the Prophethood and the Book,⁴⁸ and give him his reward in this world, and in the Hereafter he will surely be among the righteous.⁴⁹ 27

And We sent Lot,⁵⁰ when he said to his people, “You commit the indecency which no other people has ever committed before you in the world. What! Do you go to the males,⁵¹ and commit robbery and indulge in indecencies in your assemblies?”⁵² Then the only answer his people gave was to say, “Bring forth the torment of Allah if you are truthful.” Lot said, “O my Lord, help me against these mischief-makers.” 28-30

And when Our messengers came to Abraham with the good news,⁵³ they said to him, “We are going to destroy the people of this habitation,⁵⁴ for its people have become very wicked.” Abraham said, “There is Lot in it.”⁵⁵ They replied, “We know full well who is in it: we shall save him and all his household except his wife;” his wife was of those who remained behind.⁵⁶ 31-32

Then, when Our messengers came to Lot, he grew anxious for them and distressed at heart.⁵⁷ They said, “Do not fear nor grieve:⁵⁸ we shall save you and your household, except your wife, who is of those who will remain behind. We are going to bring down a torment from the sky upon the people of this habitation on account of the evil they have been committing” And We have left from the habitation a clear Sign⁵⁹ for those who use their common sense.⁶⁰ 33-35

And to Madyan, We sent their brother Shu‘aib.⁶¹ He said, “O my people, worship Allah and look forward to the Last Day,⁶² and do not commit excesses in the land wickedly.” But they treated him as a liar.⁶³ Consequently, a severe earthquake overtook them, and they lay lifeless in their dwelling-places.⁶⁴ 36-37

And We destroyed ‘Ād and Thamūd. You have seen the places where they lived.⁶⁵ Satan made their deeds seem 38-39

fair to them and misled them from the right path, although they were sensible people.⁶⁶ And We destroyed Korah and Pharaoh and Hāmān. Moses came to them with clear Signs, but they assumed arrogance in the land, whereas they could not outstrip⁶⁷ Us.

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not of its own acquisition but given by God. And this property has in no way tied up God that He may give no Command against it. He is the Master of His fire. He can command it any time to give up the property of burning. At any time He can turn a furnace into a bed of roses. But events contrary to the course of nature occur only rarely to serve some great purpose or cause. However, the usual phenomena to which we are accustomed in our daily lives, cannot be made an argument to say that Allah's power has been tied up with these, and nothing unusual can take place even by Allah's Command.

40. "Signs . . . believe": Signs for the believers in this that the Prophet Abraham did not follow the religion of his family, community and country but followed the true knowledge through which he came to know that *shirk* is falsehood and *Tauhid* the Reality; and in this that he went on exhorting his people to accept the Truth and to desist from falsehood in spite of their stubbornness and prejudices; and in this that he was even prepared to suffer the horrible punishment by the fire, but was not prepared to give up the Truth; and in this that Allah did not even spare the Prophet Abraham, His Friend, from the trials and tests; and in this that when the Prophet Abraham got successfully through the tests set by Allah, then did come Allah's succour, and in such a miraculous way that the bonfire was turned cool for him!

41. The Prophet Abraham must have said this after his safe deliverance from the fire.

42. That is, "You have built up your collective life on the foundation of idol-worship instead of God-worship, which can keep you bound together as a nation only to the extent of mudane life. For here in this world people can be got together around any creed, true or false, and any kind of agreement and concord on any belief, however wrong and ill-conceived, can become a means of the establishment of mutual friendships, kinships, brotherhoods, and all other religious, social, cultural, economic and political relationships."

43. That is, "The collective life that you have built on the false creed in the world cannot endure in the Hereafter. Only those relationships of love and friendship and cooperation and kinship and mutual

regard and esteem will endure there, which have been based on the worship of One God and virtue and piety in the world. All relationships founded on disbelief and *shirk* and deviation will be severed, and all kinds of love will change into enmity and hatred. The son and the father, the husband and the wife, the saint and the disciple, all will curse each other, and each will blame his deviation on the other, and will say, "This wicked person led me astray: he should be given a double punishment." This thing has been stated at several places in the Qur'ān. For example, in Sūrah Zukhruf, it has been said: "Friends on that Day shall become enemies of one another, except the righteous." (v. 67) In Sūrah Al-A'rāf: "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.'" (v. 38) And in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb: "And they will say: 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great men, and they led us astray from the right path. Lord, give them a double chatisement and curse them severely.'" (vv. 67-68).

44. The context shows that when the Prophet Abraham came out of the fire and spoke the preceding sentences, only Prophet Lot from the entire crowd came forward to proclaim his belief and adopt his obedience. It is just possible that many other people also on this occasion might have been convinced of the Prophet Abraham's being a true Prophet, but in view of the violent reaction that had been shown openly by the entire community and the government against Abraham's Faith, no one else could muster up courage to affirm faith in such a dangerous truth and follow it. This good fortune fell to the lot of only one man, the Prophet Lot, the nephew of the Prophet Abraham, who at last accompanied his uncle and aunt (Ḥaḍrat Sārah) in their migration also.

Here, the question may arise: Was the Prophet Lot a disbeliever and a *mushrik* before this, and did he believe only after witnessing the miracle of the Prophet Abraham's emerging safe and sound from the fire? If it is so, can a person who has been a *mushrik* be appointed to Prophethood? The answer is this: Here the Qur'ān has used the words *fa-āmana la-hū Lūṭ*, which do not necessarily imply that the Prophet Lot disbelieved in God before this, or associated other deities with Him. They only show that after this he confirmed the Prophethood of the Prophet Abraham, and adopted his obedience. Possibly the Prophet Lot was a young boy then and this might be the first very occasion when he became acquainted with the teachings of his uncle and his Prophethood.

45. That is, "I shall leave my country for the sake of my Lord

and go wherever my Lord may take me.”

46. That is, “He possesses the power to help and protect me, and whatever He decides for me will be based on wisdom.”

47. The Prophet Isaac was the son and the Prophet Jacob the grandson. The other sons of the Prophet Abraham have not been mentioned here, because from his Midianite descendents only the Prophet Shu'aib was appointed a Prophet, and no Prophet was born among his Ishmaelite descendents for 2500 years or so till our Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). Contrary to this, the descendents of the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) continued to be blessed with the Prophethood and the Book till the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

48. This covers all the Prophets who were raised from all the branches of the Prophet Abraham's progeny.

49. What is meant to be said is this: The rulers and the learned men and the priests of Babylon who tried to defeat the mission of the Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon him) and the polytheistic people who had followed their wicked chiefs blindly, have since been blotted out and no trace of them is to be found anywhere in the world, but the person whom they had wanted to annihilate by burning in the fire only because he had proclaimed the Word of Allah, and who eventually had to leave his country empty-handed, was so blessed by Allah that his name has been well known in the world since the past 4,000 years and will remain so till the Last Day. All the Muslims and the Christians and the Jews unanimously recognize that Friend of the Lord of the worlds as their spiritual Leader. Whatever guidance mankind has received during the past 40 centuries has been received through this one man and his righteous descendents. The unique reward that he will get in the Hereafter is assured, but the place of honour that he has gained even in this world has not been gained so far by any of those who have exerted themselves in pursuit of the worldly benefits and advantages.

50. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf: 80-84; Hūd: 69-83; Al-Hijr: 57-79; Al-Anbiyā: 71-75; Ash-Shu'arā: 160-175; An-Naml: 54-59; Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 133-138; Al-Qamar: 33-40.

51. That is, “You satisfy your sex desire with the males.” As stated in Al-A'rāf: 81: “You gratify your lust with men instead of women.”

52. That is, “You do not even hide yourself when you commit this filthy act, but commit it openly in your assemblies, in front of others.” The same has been stated in Sūrah An-Naml: 54, thus: “Do you commit the indecency while you see it?”

53. According to the details given of this in Sūrah Hūd and Al-Hijr, the angels who had been sent to bring the torment on the people

of the Prophet Lot, first came to the Prophet Abraham and gave him the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac and after him of the Prophet Jacob. Then they told him that they had been sent to destroy the people of Lot.

54. "This habitation" refers to the territory of the people of Lot. The Prophet Abraham at that time resided in the Palestinian city of Hebron, now called Al-Khalil. A few miles to the south-east of this city lies that part of the Dead Sea, which was once inhabited by the people of Lot and which is now under sea water. It is a low-lying area and is clearly visible from the hill country of Hebron. That is why the angels, pointing towards it, had said: "We are going to destroy this habitation." (See also E.N. 114 of Ash-Shu'arāā).

55. According to the initial part of this story as related in Sūrah Hūd, the Prophet Abraham at first was perturbed to see the angels in human shape, for he knew that the coming of the angels in human shape was always a prelude to some dangerous mission. Then, when they gave him the good news, his fear was allayed and he came to know that they had been sent to the people of Lot. Then he began making entreaties of mercy for those people (Hūd: 74-75), but his entreaties were not granted, and it was said: "Do not plead for them any more: your Lord's decree has been issued, and the punishment now cannot be averted." (v. 76) After this answer, when the Prophet Abraham lost all hope of any increase in the respite of Lot's people, he became anxious about the Prophet Lot himself, and said, what has been related here: "There is Lot in it." That is, "If the torment comes down when Lot is there, how will he and his household remain safe from it?"

56. According to Sūrah Tahrim: 10, this woman was not faithful to the Prophet Lot. That is why it was decreed that she too, would be afflicted with the torment in spite of being a Prophet's wife. Most probably when the Prophet Lot had come to Jordan after the migration and settled there, he might have married among the people living there. But the woman did not believe even after spending a lifetime with him, and her sympathies remained with her own people. As Allah has no consideration for relationships and brotherhoods and every person's case is decided on the basis of his own faith and morality, even being a Prophet's wife did not profit her in any way, and she met her doom along with her own people with whom she had remained attached in faith and morality.

57. The reason for this anxiety and distress was that the angels had come in the shape of handsome, young boys. The Prophet Lot was

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مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ ۖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ
 مَّنْ آخَرَقْنَا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾
 مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ۖ اتَّخَذَتْ
 بَيْتًا ۖ وَإِنْ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 يَعْلَمُ مَا يُدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَتِلْكَ
 الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۖ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

وقف لازم

ع ١٣

الجزء ٢١

أَنْتَ مَا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۗ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى

عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾
 وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۗ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ
 وَقُولُوا أَمَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَيْنَا وَإِلَيْكُمْ
 وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ ۗ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ
 الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۗ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا
 الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ
 إِذًا لِآرْتَابِ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ بَلْ هُوَ آيَةٌ بَيِّنَةٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
 الْعِلْمَ ۗ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ
 مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ أَوَلَمْ
 يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَ
 ذِكْرًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي

Consequently, We seized each one of them on account of his sin: then against some We sent a wind to rain stones on them;⁶⁸ some others were overtaken by a terrible blast,⁶⁹ and some other We sank underground,⁷⁰ and some We drowned.⁷¹ Allah was not unjust to them, but they were themselves being unjust to their souls.⁷² 40

The likeness of those who have taken other patrons than Allah, is the likeness of a spider, which makes itself a dwelling; and the weakest of all dwellings is the dwelling of a spider. Would that these people had knowledge!⁷³ Allah surely knows whomever they invoke instead of Him: He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.⁷⁴ These parables We cite for the instruction of the people, but only those people understand them, who have knowledge. Allah has created the heavens and the earth with the Truth.⁷⁵ Indeed there is a Sign in this for the believers.⁷⁶ 41-44

(O Prophet,) recite this Book which has been revealed to you, and establish the *Ṣalāt*:⁷⁷ surely the *Ṣalāt* restrains from indecent and evil acts,⁷⁸ and the remembrance of Allah is a thing even greater⁷⁹ than this; Allah knows whatever you do. 45

And⁸⁰ do not dispute with the people of the Book except in the best manner,⁸¹—save with those who are wicked among them⁸²—and say to them, “We have believed in that which has been sent down to us as well as in that which had been sent down to you. Our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered⁸³ (as Muslims). (O Prophet,) We have likewise sent down the Book to you:⁸⁴ therefore, those to whom We gave the Book before this, believe in it,⁸⁵ and so do many of these people,⁸⁶ and none but the disbelievers deny Our Revelations.⁸⁷ 46-47

(O Prophet,) you did not read any book before this, nor did you write any with your hand. If it were so, the worshippers of falsehood could have been involved in doubt.⁸⁸ These are, in fact, clear Signs in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge;⁸⁹ and none deny 48-52

Our Revelations except the wicked. They say, "Why have Signs⁹⁰ not been sent down upon this person from his Lord?" Say, "The Signs are with Allah: I am only a plain warner." Is this (Sign) not enough for these people that We have sent down to you the Book, which is recited to them?⁹¹ Indeed, there is mercy in it and admonition for those who believe.⁹² (O Prophet,) say, "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you. He knows all that is there in the heavens and the earth. Those who believe in falsehood and deny Allah, shall be the losers."

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aware of his people's morals. Therefore, he became perturbed at their arrival. He was thinking, "If I receive these guests in my house, it will be difficult to save them from the immoral people; if I do not receive them, it will be highly uncivil and unbecoming of the noble people. Moreover, if I do not provide shelter to these travellers, they will stay the night elsewhere, which would mean that I have myself given them away to the wicked people." What happened after this has not been related here. But according to the details given in Sūrahs Hūd, Al-Hijr and Al-Qamar, the people of the city thronged to the Prophet Lot's house and insisted that the guests be handed over to them for immorality.

58. That is, "As for us, you should neither fear that they will in any way be able to harm us, nor be anxious about how you will protect us from them." This was the time when the angels revealed their identity to the Prophet Lot, and said that they were not men but angels, who had been sent to bring the scourge on his people. According to the elucidation in Sūrah Hūd, when the people were rushing into Lot's house and he felt that he could in no way save his guests from them, he cried out: "I wish I had the power to set you right, or I could find some strong support for refuge." (v. 80) At this time the angels said: "O Lot, we are messengers sent by your Lord; they will not be able to harm you at all." (v. 81).

59. "A clear Sign": the Dead Sea, which is also called Sea of Lot. The Qur'ān at several places has addressed the disbelievers of Makkah, saying, "A Sign of the torment that visited this wicked people on account of their misdeeds still exists on the highway, which you see night and day during your trade journeys to Syria." (Al-Hijr: 76; Aş-Şāffāt: 137).

Today it is being admitted with near certainty that the southern

end of the Dead Sea came into being as a result of a violent earthquake when the area in which Sodom, the central city of the people of Lot, was located sank underground. In this part there are still signs of some submerged habitations. Exploratory attempts are being made with the modern diving apparatus but the results are still awaited. (For further explanation, see E. N. 114 of Ash-Shu'arāā).

60. For the Islamic punishment of sodomy, see E.N. 68 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf.

71. For comparison, see Al-A'rāf: 85-93, Hūd: 84-96, Ash-Shu'arāā: 177-191.

62. This can have two meanings: (1) "Look forward to the life hereafter, and do not think that there is no life after this worldly life, when you will have to render an account of your deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly." (2) "Work righteously so as to meet a good end in the Hereafter."

63. That is, "They did not believe that the Prophet Shu'aib was a Messenger of Allah and the teachings he gave were from Allah and that if they rejected him they would be punished by a torment from Allah."

64. "Dwelling-places": the whole area and country inhabited by those people.

65. Every Arab was acquainted with the lands where these two nations had lived. The whole of southern Arabia now known as Aḥqāf, Yaman and Haḥramaut, was the land of 'Ād in the ancient times, and the Arabs knew it. The whole area in the north of the Hijāz, from Rābigh to 'Aqabah and from Madīnah and Khaiber to Taimā' and Tabūk, still abounds with Thamūdic monuments, which must have been more prominent than they are today in the time when the Qur'an was being revealed.

66. That is, "They were not ignorant and foolish people, but were the most civilized people of their own times. They performed and carried out their worldly duties and chores very carefully and intelligently. Therefore, it cannot be said that Satan deluded them and pulled them on to his way by artifice and deception. Nay, they adopted the way shown by Satan with open eyes and with full understanding because it promised great pleasures and advantages; and they abandoned the way presented by the Prophets because it appeared to be colourless, tasteless and troublesome due to moral restrictions."

67. That is, "They could not have got away and escaped Allah's grasp: they had no power to frustrate and defeat Allah's plans and schemes."

68. That is, 'Ād who were subjected to a furious windstorm which blew on them for seven nights and eight days continuously.

69. That is, Thamūd.

70. That is, Korah.

71. That is, Pharaoh and Hāmān.

72. The stories that have been related in the foregoing verses, have been addressed and directed both to the believers and to the disbelievers. To the believers they have been addressed so that they do not feel discouraged and distressed at heart, and keep aloft the banner of the Truth firmly and patiently even in the face of the severe persecutions and hardships, and should have full faith in Allah that His succour shall ultimately come, and He will frustrate the designs of the wicked people and make the Word of the Truth to prevail. On the other hand, these have been addressed to those wicked people also, who in their arrogance were bent upon exterminating the Islamic movement. They have been warned to the effect: "You have formed a wrong opinion about Allah's forbearance and clemency. You think that His is a lawless Kingdom. If you have not been seized so far for your rebellion and your tyrannies and wicked deeds and have been granted a long respite so that you may reform yourselves, you have inferred that there exists no power whatever which can call you to account, and that one can go on doing whatever one likes endlessly on this earth. This misconception will ultimately lead you to the same doom that has already been met by the peoples of Noah and Lot and Shu'aib, and experienced by 'Ād and Thamād, and seen by Korah and Pharaoh.

73. All the above-mentioned nations were involved in *shirk*, and their belief about their deities was that they were their supporters and helpers and guardians, and had the power to make or mar their destinies; so when they will have won their goodwill by worship and presentation of offerings they will succour them in need and protect them against calamities and afflictions. But, as shown by the historical events cited above, all their beliefs and superstitions proved to be baseless when their destruction was decreed by Allah. Then no god, and no god-incarnate, and no saint or spirit, and no jinn or angel, whom they worshipped came to their rescue, and they met their destruction with the realization that their expectations and beliefs had been false and futile. After relating these events, Allah is now warning the *mushriks* to the effect: "The reality of the toy-house of expectations that you have built on your faith in the powerless servants and imaginary deities, apart from the real Master and Ruler of the universe, is no more than the cobweb of a spider. Just as a cobweb cannot stand the slightest interference by a finger, so will the toy-house of your expectations collapse in its first clash with the scheme of Allah. It is nothing but ignorance that you are involved in the web of superstition. Had

you any knowledge of the Reality you would not have built your system of life on baseless props. The fact is that none other than the One Lord of the worlds in this universe is the Owner of power and authority, and His support is the only support which is reliable. "Now whoever rejects *tāghūt* and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way. And Allah hears everything and knows everything." (Al-Baqarah : 256).

74. That is, "Allah knows full well the reality of those beings and things which they have taken as their deities and which they invoke for help. They are absolutely powerless. The Owner of power is only Allah, Who is controlling the system of this universe according to His own wisdom and design."

Another translation of this verse can be: "Allah knows full well that those whom they invoke, apart from Him, are nonentities, and He alone is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."

75. That is, "The system of the universe is based on the truth and not on falsehood. Whoever ponders over this system with an unbiased mind will realize that the earth and the heavens owe their existence to reality and fact and not to superstition and fancy. Here there is no possibility that whatever a person may conceive in his mind and whatever philosophy he may invent out of his personal whim and conjecture should fit in with the system. Here only such a thing can succeed and endure, which is in harmony with the reality and actual fact. A structure that is raised on unreal presumptions and hypotheses will ultimately collapse when it clashes with the reality. The system of the universe clearly testifies that its Creator is One God, and One God alone is its Master and Disposer. If a person works against this basic Reality on the presumption that this world has no God, or that it has many gods, who devour the offerings of their devotees and in return give them a licence to do whatever they please and a guarantee to live in peace and happiness, the Reality will not change due to his presumptions, but, on the contrary, he himself will some time meet with a grave disaster."

76. That is, "A clear evidence exists in the creation of the earth and the heavens about the truth of *Tauhīd* and the refutation of polytheism and atheism, but this evidence is found only by those who accept the teachings of the Prophets of Allah. Those who deny them do not find it even though they see everything."

77. The address apparently is directed to the Holy Prophet but, in fact, it is meant for all the believers. Until now they were being counselled patience and reliance on Allah to brave the extreme trying conditions in which they found themselves and the persecutions they

were being subjected to on account of their faith. Now they are being told to recite the Qur'ān and establish the *Ṣalāt* as a practical device, for these are the two things which endow a believer with a strong character and a wonderful capacity by which he can not only brave successfully the most violent storms of evil and falsehood but can even subdue them. But man can acquire this power from the recitation of the Qur'ān and the Prayer only when he does not remain content with the mere recital of the words but also understands well the Qur'ānic teachings and absorbs them in his soul, and his Prayer does not remain confined to physical movements but becomes the very function of his heart and the motive force for his morals and character. The desired quality of the Prayer is being mentioned by the Qur'ān itself in the next sentence. As for its recitation, one should know that the recitation which does not reach the heart beyond the throat, cannot even give man enough power to remain steadfast to his faith, not to speak of enabling him to withstand the furies of unbelief. About such people, a *Hadīth* says: "They will recite the Qur'ān, but the Qur'ān will not go beyond their throats; they will leave the Faith just as the arrow leaves the bow." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Mu'aṭṭā'). As a matter of fact, the recitation which does not effect any change in a man's way of thinking, and his morals and character, and he goes on doing what the Qur'ān forbids, is not the recitation of a believer at all. About such a one the Holy Prophet has said: "He who makes lawful what the Qur'ān has declared unlawful, has not believed in the Qur'ān at all." (Tirmidhi, on the authority of Ṣuhaib Rūmī). Such a recitation does not reform and strengthen a man's self and spirit, but makes him even more stubborn against Allah and impudent before his own conscience, and destroys his character altogether. For the case of the person who believes in the Qur'ān as a Divine Book, reads it and comes to know what his God has enjoined, and then goes on violating His injunctions, is of the culprit, who commits a crime not due to ignorance but after full knowledge of the law. The Holy Prophet has elucidated this point in a brief sentence, thus: "The Qur'ān is a testimony in your favour as well as against you." (Muslim). That is, "If you follow the Qur'an rightly, it is a testimony in your favour. Whenever you are called to account for your deeds, here or in the hereafter, you can produce the Qur'ān as a testimony in your defence, saying that whatever you did was in accordance with this Book. If what you did was precisely according to it, no jurist in the world will be able to punish you, nor will God in the Hereafter hold you accountable for it. But if this Book has reached you, and you have read it and found out what your Lord demands from you, what He enjoins and what He forbids, and then you adopt an

attitude opposed to it, then this Book will be a testimony against you. It will further strengthen the criminal case against you in the Court of God. Then it will in no way be possible for you to escape the punishment, or receive a light punishment, by making the excuse of ignorance.”

78. This is an important characteristic out of the many characteristics of the Prayer, which has been presented here prominently in view of its relevance to the context. To counter the severe storm of opposition and resistance that the Muslims were experiencing in Makkah, they stood in need of a moral force rather than any material power. To bring about the moral force and develop it suitably two practical devices were pointed out in the first instance, the recitation of the Qur’ān and the establishment of the *Ṣalāt*. Now they are being told that the establishment of the *Ṣalāt* is the means through which they can get rid of those evils in which they themselves had been involved before they embraced Islam and in which the non-Muslim Arabs and the non-Arab world around them were involved at that time.

With a little thinking one can easily understand why this special advantage of the Prayer has been particularly mentioned here. Evidently, getting rid of the moral evils is not only useful insofar as it is beneficial for those who attain the moral purity, both here and in the Hereafter, but its inevitable advantage is that it gives them unique superiority over those who might be involved in diverse moral evils, and who might be exerting their utmost to sustain the impure system of ignorance, which nourishes those evils, against the efforts of the morally pure people. Indecent and evil acts are those which man by nature abhors, and which have always been held as evil in principle by the people of every community and society, however depraved and perverted practically. The Arab society in the days of the revelation of the Qur’ān was no exception to this. Those people also were aware of the moral virtues and the evils: they valued the good above the evil and there might be none among them, who regarded the evil as identical with the good, or depreciated good. Under such conditions, in a perverted society like that, the emergence of a movement which revolutionised morally members of the same society itself as soon as they came into contact with it, and raised them in character high above their contemporaries, inevitably had widespread effects. The common Arabs could not possibly fail to feel the moral impact of this movement, which eradicated evils and promoted goodness, and instead go on following those who were themselves morally corrupt and were fighting to sustain the system of ignorance, which had been nourishing those evils since centuries. That is why the Qur’ān at that time exhorted the Muslims to establish *Ṣalāt* instead of urging them to collect material resources and

force and strength that could win over the people's hearts and defeat the enemy without any material force.

The virtue of the Prayer that has been mentioned here has two aspects: its essential and inseparable quality that it restrains from evil and indecent acts, and its desired quality that the one who performs it should in actual fact refrain from evil and indecent acts. As for the first quality, the Prayer does restrain people from the evils. Anyone who ponders a little over the nature of the Prayer, will admit that of all the checks and brakes that can be put on man to restrain him from the evils, the Prayer can be the most effective. After all, what check could be more effective than this that man should be called upon five times a day for the remembrance of Allah and made to remind himself again and again that he is not wholly free and independent in this world but is the servant of One God, and his God is He Who is aware of his open as well as hidden acts, even of the most secret aims and intentions of his heart, and a time will surely come when he will have to account for all his deeds before his God. Then he is not only reminded of this but is given practical training at every Prayer time that he should not disobey any of his God's Commands even secretly. From the time that he stands up for the Prayer till its completion man has to perform continuously certain acts in which there is no third person, besides him and his God, who can know whether he has obeyed God's law or disobeyed it. For instance, if the man's *wudū* (state of ablutions) has become void and he stands up for the Prayer, there can be no one, besides him and God, who will know that he is no longer in the state of *wudū*. If the man has expressed no intention of the Prayer but just goes on performing all the required movements and recites poetry, for instance, instead of the prescribed texts quietly, there is none, besides him and his God, who can be aware of the secret that he has not, in fact, performed his Prayer at all. Notwithstanding this, if a person offers the Prayer five times a day, fulfilling faithfully all the conditions of the Divine law in respect of the cleanliness of the body and dress, and the essentials of the Prayer and its recitation, etc. it means that through this Prayer his conscience is being awakened to life several times a day, he is being helped to become a responsible and dutiful person, and he is being practically trained that he should, under his own urge of obedience, abide by the law which he has believed in openly as well as secretly, regardless whether there is any external force to make him abide by it or not, and whether the people of the world have any knowledge of his intentions and deeds or not.

Thus considered, one cannot help admitting that the Prayer not means of power so that their small minority should develop a moral

only restrains man from the evils and indecencies, but, in fact, there is no other method of training in the world, which may be so effective as the Prayer is in restraining man from the evils. As for the question whether or not man in actual fact refrains from the evils even after attendance at the Prayer, this depends upon the man himself, who is undergoing training for self-reform. If he has the intention to benefit from it, and endeavours for it, the reformatory effects of the Prayer will certainly have their impact on him. Otherwise, evidently, no reformatory device in the world can be effective with a person, who is not prepared to receive any impact of it, or tries to avoid its impact intentionally. This can be explained by an example. The essential quality of food is to nourish the body and develop it. But this advantage can be had only when food is allowed to be assimilated. If a person vomits what he eats after every meal, his food cannot profit him in any way. Just as, keeping such a person in view, one cannot say that food is not nutritious for the body, because so-and-so is becoming a skeleton in spite of eating food, so can no one present the example of an unrighteous offerer of the Prayer and say that the Prayer does not restrain from the evils, because so-and-so is un-righteous in spite of his Prayer. Just as about such a person it will be apt to say that he does not offer the Prayer at all, so about the person who vomits everything he eats, it will be apt to say that he does not eat his food at all.

Precisely the same thing has been reported from the Holy Prophet and some great Companions and their followers. 'Imrān bin Ḥuṣain reports that the Holy Prophet said: "He whose Prayer did not restrain him from the evil and indecent acts, offered no Prayer at all." (Ibn Abī Ḥātim). Ibn 'Abbās has reported the Holy Prophet as saying: "The Prayer which did not restrain a person from the evil and indecent acts, led him further away from Allah." (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ṭabarānī). A *Ḥadīth* containing the same theme has been reported by Ḥasan Baṣri directly from the Holy Prophet (Ibn Jarīr, Baihaqi). Another *Ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd is to the effect: "He who did not obey the Prayer, offered no Prayer at all, and obedience to the Prayer is that one should refrain from the evil and indecent acts." (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim). Several sayings to the same effect have been reported on the authority of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, Ḥasan Baṣri, Qatādah and A'amash, etc. Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq has said: "He who wants to know whether his Prayer has been accepted or not, should see how far his Prayer has restrained him from the evil and indecent acts. If he has been restrained from the evils, his Prayer has been accepted." (*Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*).

79. This can have several meanings: (1) "That the remembrance

of Allah (i.e. Prayer) is a thing of much higher value: it not only restrains from the evils, but, over and above that, it induces people to act righteously and urges them to excel one another in good acts," (2) "that Allah's remembrance in itself is a great thing: it is the best of acts: no act of man is greater in value than this." (3) "that Allah's remembrance of you is a greater thing than your remembrance of Him. Allah has said in the Qur'ān: 'So remember Me: I will remember you'." (Al-Baqarah: 156). Thus, when the servant remembers Allah in the Prayer, inevitably Allah also will remember him, and the merit of Allah's remembering the servant is certainly greater than the servant's remembering Allah. Besides these three meanings, there is another subtle meaning also, which the wife of Hadrat Abud-Dardā' has explained. She says, "Allah's remembrance is not restricted to the Prayer, but its sphere is much vaster. When a man observes a fast, or pays the *Zakāt*, or performs a righteous act, he inevitably remembers Allah. That is why the righteous act emanates from him. Likewise, when a man refrains from an evil act when an opportunity exists for it, even this also is the result of Allah's remembrance. Thus, the remembrance of Allah pervades the entire life of a believer."

80. It should be noted that a little below in this Sūrah the people are being exhorted to migrate. At that time Habash was the only place of safety to which the Muslims could migrate, and Habash in those days was under the domination of the Christians. Therefore, in these verses the Muslims are being instructed as to how they should argue and discuss matters concerning religion with the people of the Book when such an occasion arises.

81. That is, "The discussion should be conducted rationally, in a civilized and decent language, so that the ideas of the other person may be reformed. The preacher's chief aim should be to appeal to the addressee's heart, convey the truth to him and bring him to the right path. He should not fight like a wrestler whose only object is to defeat his opponent. He should rather conduct himself like a physician who is ever cautious not to cause the patient's ailment to worsen by any of his own mistakes, and tries to cure him with the least possible trouble. This instruction has been given here especially in connection with the conduct of a discussion with the people of the Book, but is a general instruction pertaining to the preaching of the religion and it has been given at several places in the Qur'ān. For example, "O Prophet, invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and excellent admonition and discuss things with the people in the best manner." (An-Nahl: 125). "O Prophet, goodness and evil are not alike. Repel evil with what is best. You will see that he with whom you had enmity, has become your

closest friend." (Hā Mīm As-Sajdah: 34). "O Prophet, repel evil with what is best: We are fully aware of what they utter against you." (Al-Mu'minūn: 96) "O Prophet, adopt the way of leniency and forbearance; enjoin what is good and avoid useless discussions with the ignorant people. If Satan ever excites you to anger seek, refuge in Allah." (Al-A'rāf; 199-200).

82. That is, "With those who adopt an attitude of wickedness a different attitude may also be adopted according to the nature and extent of their wickedness. In other words, one cannot, and should not, adopt a soft and gentle attitude towards all sorts of the people under all circumstances at all time, which might be mistaken for the weakness and meekness of the inviter to the Truth. Islam does teach its followers to be polite, gentle and reasonable, but it does not teach them to be unduly humble and meek so that they are not taken for granted by every cruel and wicked person."

83. In these sentences Allah Himself has provided guidance to the best method of discussion, which the inviters to the Truth should adopt. The method is this: "Do not make the error or deviation of the other person the basis and starting point of the discussion, but begin the discussion with those points of truth and justice which are common between you and your opponent. That is, the discussion should start from the points of agreement and not from the points of difference. Then, arguing from the agreed points, the addressee should be made to understand that, in the matter of the things in which you differ, your stand is in conformity with the agreed points whereas his stand is contradictory to them."

In this connection, one should bear in mind the fact that the people of the Book did not deny Revelation, Prophethood and *Tauhīd*, like the polytheists of Arabia, but believed in these realities just like the Muslims. After agreement on these basic things, the main thing that could become the basis of difference between them could be that the Muslims would not believe in the Divine Scriptures sent down to them, and would invite them to believe in the Divine Book sent down to themselves, and would declare them disbelievers if they did not believe in it. This would have been a strong basis of their conflict. But the Muslims had a different stand. They believed as true all those Books that were with the people of the Book, and then also had believed in the Revelation that had been sent down to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). After this it was for the people of the Book to tell the rational ground for which they believed in one Book sent by Allah and rejected the other. That is why Allah here has instructed the Muslims that whenever they have to deal with the people of the Book, they should

first of all present before them this very point of view in a positive manner. Say to them: "We believe in the same God in Whom you believe and we are obedient to Him. We have submitted ourselves to all those Commands and injunctions and teachings that have come from Him, whether they were sent down to you, or to us. We are obedient servants of God and not of a country or a community or a race, that we should submit to God's Command when it is sent down in one place and reject it when it is sent down in another place. This thing has been repeated at several places in the Qur'ān and particularly in relation to the people of the Book, it has been presented forcefully. For this, see Al-Baqarah: 4, 136, 177, 285; Āl-i-'Imrān: 84; An-Nisā': 136, 150 to 152, 162 to 164; Ash-Shu'arāā: 13.

84. This can have two meanings: (1) "Just as We had sent down the Books to the former Prophets, so We have sent down this Book to you"; and (2) "We have sent down this Book with the teaching that it should be believed in not by rejecting Our former Books but by affirming faith in all of them."

85. The context itself shows that this does not imply all the people of the Book but only those who were blessed with the right understanding and the knowledge of the Divine Scriptures, and were "the people of the Book" in the true sense. When this last Book of Allah came before them, confirming His earlier Books, they did not show any stubbornness or obstinacy but accepted it sincerely as they had accepted the previous Books.

86. "These people": the people of Arabia. What it means to say is this: The truth-loving people, whether they already possess a Divine Book or do not possess any, are affirming faith in it everywhere.

87. Here, "the disbelievers" imply those people who are not prepared to give up their prejudices and accept the truth, or those who reject the truth because they do not want their lusts and their unbridled freedom to be subjected to restrictions.

88. This is the same argument that has already been given in Sūrah Yūnus and Qaṣaṣ as a proof of the Holy Prophet's Prophethood. (See E.N. 21 of Yūnus and E.N.'s 64 and 109 of Al-Qaṣaṣ. For further explanation, see E.N. 107 of An-Naḥl, E.N. 105 of Bani Isrā'il, E.N. 66 of Al-Mu'minūn, E.N. 12 of Al-Furqān, and E.N. 84 of Ash-Shu'arāā).

The basis of the argument in this verse is that the Holy Prophet was unlettered. His compatriots and his kinsmen among whom he had spent his whole life, from birth to old age, knew fully well that he had never read a book nor ever handled a pen. Presenting this actual fact Allah says: "This is a proof of the fact that the vast and deep knowledge of the teachings of the Divine Books, of the stories of the

former Prophets, of the beliefs of the various religions and creeds, of the histories of the ancient nations, and the questions of social and moral and economic life, which is being presented through this unlettered, illiterate man could not have been attained by him through any means but Revelation. If he had been able to read and write and the people had seen him reading books and undertaking serious studies, the worshippers of falsehood could have had some basis for their doubts, that he had acquired the knowledge not through Revelation but through study and reading. But the fact of his being absolutely illiterate has left no basis whatever for any such doubt. Therefore, there can be no ground, except sheer stubbornness, which can be regarded as rational in any degree for denying his Prophethood."

89. That is, "The presentation of a Book like the Qur'ān by an unlettered person, and the manifestation by him, all of a sudden, of extraordinary qualities of character while nobody ever noticed him making any preparation for these previously, are in fact the clearest Signs which serve as pointers to his Prophethood for those who are possessed of knowledge and wisdom." If one reviews the life-story of any great historical personage, one can always discover the factors in his environment, which moulded his personality and prepared him for the excellences and qualities that emanated from him in life. There always exists a clear relationship between his environment and the component aspects of his personality. But no source whatever can be discovered in his environment of the wonderful qualities and excellences that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) displayed. In his case, neither in the contemporary Arab society nor in the society of the neighbouring countries with which Arabia had any relations can one discover those factors which could have any remote relationship with the component aspects of the Holy Prophet's personality. This is the reality on whose basis it has been asserted here that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad's personality is not one Sign but a collection of many clear Signs. An ignorant person may not see any of these Signs but those who are possessed of knowledge have become convinced in their hearts by seeing these Signs that he is most certainly a true Prophet of Allah.

90. That is, miracles by seeing which one may be convinced that Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) is really a Prophet of Allah.

91. That is, "A Book like the Qur'ān has been sent down to you in spite of your being unlettered. Is it not by itself a great miracle which should convince the people of your Prophethood? Do they yet need another miracle after this? The other miracles were the miracles for those who witnessed them. But this miracle is ever present in front of

them. It is being recited before them almost daily; they can witness it as and when they like."

Even after such an assertion and argument by the Qur'ān the audacity of those who try to prove that the Holy Prophet was literate is astonishing. The fact, however, is that the Qur'ān here has presented in clear terms the Holy Prophet's being illiterate as a strong proof of his Prophethood. The traditions which lend support to the claim that the Holy Prophet could read and write, or had learnt reading and writing later in life, stand rejected at first glance, for no tradition opposed to the Qur'ān can be acceptable. Then these traditions in themselves are too weak to become the basis for an argument. One of these is a tradition from Bukhārī that when the peace treaty of Ḥudaibiya was being written down, the representative of the disbelievers of Makkah objected to the word *Rasūl Allah* being added to the name of the Holy Prophet. At this the Holy Prophet ordered the writer (Ḥaḍrat 'Alī) to cross out the word *Rasūl-Allah* and write Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah instead. Ḥaḍrat 'Alī refused to cross out *Rasūl-Allah*. Then the Holy Prophet took it in his own hand, struck out the word himself and wrote Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah.

But this tradition from Bāra' bin 'Āzib appears at four places in Bukhārī and at two places in Muslim and everywhere in different words:

(1) At one place in Bukhārī (*Kitāb-uṣ-Ṣulḥ*) the words of this tradition are to the effect: "The Holy Prophet told Ḥaḍrat 'Alī to strike out the words. He submitted that he could not do that. At last, the Holy Prophet crossed them out with his own hand."

(2) In the same book the second tradition is to the effect: "Then he (the Holy Prophet) said to 'Alī: Cross out *Rasūl-Allah*. He said: By God, I shall never cross out your name. At last, the Holy Prophet took the document and wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah."

(3) The third tradition, again from Barā' bin 'Āzib is found in *Kitāb-ul-Jizīa* in Bukhārī to the effect: "The Holy Prophet himself could not write. He said to 'Alī: Cross out *Rasūl-Allah*. He submitted: By God! I shall never cross out these words. At this, the Holy Prophet said: Show me the place where these words are written. He showed him the place, and the Holy Prophet crossed out the words with his own hand."

(4) The fourth tradition is in Bukhārī's *Kitāb-ul-Maghāzī* to the effect: "So the Holy Prophet took the document although he did not know writing, and he wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muḥammad bin 'Abdullah."

(5) Again from Barā' bin 'Āzib there is a tradition in Muslim

(*Kitāb-ul-Jihād*) saying that on Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī’s refusal the Holy Prophet himself wiped off the words *Rasūl-Allah*.”

(6) The second tradition from him in the same book says, “The Holy Prophet said to ‘Alī: Show me where the word *Rasūl-Allah* is written. Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī showed him the place, and he wiped it off and wrote Ibn ‘Abdullah.

The disparity in the traditions clearly indicates that the intermediary reporters have not reported the words of Ḥaḍrat Barā’ bin ‘Azib (may Allah be pleased with him) accurately. Therefore, none of these reports can be held as perfectly reliable so that it could be said with certainty that the Holy Prophet had written the words “Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullah” with his own hand. Probably when Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī refused to wipe off the word *Rasul-Allah*, the Holy Prophet might have himself wiped it off after finding out the place where it was written, and then might have got the word Ibn ‘Abdullah substituted by him or by some other writer. Other traditions show that there were two writers who were writing down the peace treaty; Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī and Muḥammad bin Maslamah (*Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. V, p. 217). Therefore, it is not impossible that what one writer did not do was got done by the other writer. However, if the Holy Prophet actually wrote his name with his own hand, there are plenty of instances of this in the world. The illiterate people learn to write their own name although they cannot read or write anything else.

The other tradition on whose basis it has been claimed that the Holy Prophet was literate, has been reported by Ibn Abī Shaibah and ‘Umar bin Shabbah from Mujāhid. It says: “The Holy Prophet had learnt reading and writing before his death.” But, in the first place, it is a weak tradition on account of its links as said by Ḥāfiz Ibn Kathīr: “It is weak: it has no basis.” Secondly, it is weak otherwise also, for if the Holy Prophet had really learnt reading and writing later in life, it would have become a well known fact. Many of the Companions would have reported it, and it would also have been known from which person (or persons) he had learnt this. But no one except one man, ‘Aun bin ‘Abdullah, from whom Mujāhid heard this, has reported it. And this ‘Aun was not even a Companion, but a follower of the Companions, who does not at all tell from which Companion (or Companions) he got this information. Evidently, on the basis of such weak traditions nothing which contradicts well known facts can become acceptable.

92. That is, “The revelation of this Book is, without any doubt, a great bounty of Allah, and it contains great admonitions for the people. But only those people can benefit by it, who believe in it.”

السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
 الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۗ وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ
 الْعَذَابُ ۗ وَلِيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً ۗ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ
 وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾ يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ۗ وَ
 مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ۗ وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ لِيُعْبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا إِنْ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ ۗ فَايَايَ فاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذٰئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ
 ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ
 غُرَفًا تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ الَّذِينَ
 صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَكَأَيِّن مِّن دَابَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ
 يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّن خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ اللَّهُ
 يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ ۗ إِنْ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّن نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ
 بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَا
 هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ۗ
 لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۗ
 فَلَمَّا نَجَّوهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۗ وَلِيَسْتَمْتَعُوا
 قَسُوفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا ۗ وَيَتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ
 حَوْلِهِمْ ۗ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۗ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن

These people wish that you hasten the torment on them.⁹³ Had a time not been fixed for it, the torment would already have overtaken them. And most certainly it shall come (at the appointed time) suddenly while they would least expect it. They challenge you to hasten the torment, whereas Hell has encircled the disbelievers, (and they will know of it) on the Day when the torment will cover them from above them as well as from beneath their feet, and will say, "Now taste your own misdeeds." 53-55

O My servants, who have believed, My earth is vast: so worship Me alone.⁹⁴ Every living being has to taste death: then, ultimately you shall all be returned to Us.⁹⁵ Those who have believed and done good works, We shall lodge them in the high palaces of Paradise, beneath which canals will be flowing: therein they shall live for ever. What an excellent reward for the doers (of good)⁹⁶— for those who have shown patience⁹⁷ and put full trust in their Lord!⁹⁸ How many creatures are there that do not carry their provisions with them: Allah provides for them and for you too: He hears everything and knows everything.⁹⁹ 56-60

If you ask them,¹⁰⁰ "Who has created the earth and the heavens and Who has subjected the moon and the sun?" they will surely say, "Allah." How are they then being deceived? Allah it is Who gives abundantly to those of His servants He pleases and sparingly to those He wills. Surely Allah knows everything. If you ask them, "Who sent down rainwater from the sky and thereby raised the dead earth back to life?" they will surely say, "Allah." Say, "Praise be to Allah!"¹⁰¹ Yet most of them do not use their common sense. 61-63

And the life of this world is nothing but a sport and a pastime!¹⁰² The home of real life is the Hereafter. Would that they knew!¹⁰³ When they board the ship, they invoke Allah, making their Faith pure for Him only; then, when He brings them safe to land, they start committing *shirk* 64-67

that they may show ingratitude to Him for safe deliverance and enjoy (the life of this world).¹⁰⁴ Well, they will soon come to know. Do they not see that We have made a safe Sanctuary, while the people are snatched away from all around them?¹⁰⁵ Do they yet believe in falsehood and deny the favours of Allah?

93. That is, "They are challenging you again and again that if you are a true messenger and they are really denying the Truth, then you should not delay the torment with which you threaten them."

94. This is an allusion to the *Hijrah*, which implies this: "If you feel that it is becoming difficult to worship God in Makkah, you may leave it and move to another place where you can live as the true servants of God, for God's earth is vast. You should serve Allah and not your nation and country." This shows that the real thing is not the nation and the home and the country but the worship of Allah. If at some time the demands of the nation and country's love clash with the demands of Allah's worship, it is the time of trial for the believer's faith. The true believer will worship Allah and spurn the nation and the country and home. The false claimant to the Faith will abandon the Faith and remain clinging to his nation and his country and home. This verse is clearly indicative of the fact that a true worshipper of God can be a patriot but he cannot be a worshipper of the nation and the country. For him the worship of God is the dearest thing in life for the sake of which he will sacrifice everything else, but will never be prepared to sacrifice it for anything else.

95. That is, "Do not be anxious for your life: one has to die sooner or later. No one has come to live for ever in this world. Therefore, your real problem is not how to save life, but your real problem is how to save your Faith, and fulfil the requirements of God-worship. You have ultimately to return to Us. If you lost your faith for the sake of saving your life the result in the Hereafter will be different, but if you lost your life for the sake of saving your faith the result will be just the opposite. Therefore, you should be anxious only about what you will bring when you return to Us. Will you come with a faith sacrificed for the sake of life, or a life sacrificed for the sake of the faith?"

96. That is, "Even if you remained deprived of all the worldly blessings because of your faith and righteousness and ended up as a total failure from the worldly point of view, you should rest assured that you will be compensated for it, and not only compensated but

rewarded excellently.”

97. “Who . . . patience”: who remained steadfast in faith in the face of hardships and afflictions and losses and persecutions; who have endured the consequences of the faith and have not turned away; who have seen the advantages and benefits of abandoning the faith and have not been lured away by them; who have seen the disbelievers and the wrongdoers prosper in the world and have not cast even a stray glance at their wealth and splendour.”

98. “Put . . . Lord”: Who did not put their trust in their possessions and their business and their clans and tribes but in their Lord; who were prepared to fight every power and endure every danger for the sake of their faith only on the basis of their trust in their Lord irrespective of the worldly means, and left their homes if their faith so demanded; who trusted their Lord that He would not let go waste the rewards of their faith and good works, and were sure that He would succour His believers and righteous servants even in this world and bless them with the best rewards in the Hereafter as well.

99. That is, “While migrating you should not be worried about your means of livelihood as you should not worry about your life’s safety. For none of the birds and the animals of the land and the sea that you find around yourself carries its provision with it. Allah is providing for all of them; wherever they go they get their provision through Allah’s bounty. Therefore, do not be disheartened by the thought that if you left your homes for the sake of your faith, you would have nothing to eat. Allah will provide for you as well from the sources from which He is providing for the countless of His other creatures.”

Precisely the same thing was taught by the Prophet Jesus (may Allah’s peace be upon him) to his disciples when he had said:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is and to-

اَتْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ اِلٰهٍ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ اَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾
 وَ الَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِیْنَا لَنَهْدِيْهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَاِنَّ اِلٰهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

68-69

Who would be more wicked than he who forges a lie against Allah, or denies the Truth when it has reached him?¹⁰⁶ Is not Hell the fit abode for such disbelievers? Those who will strive in Our cause, We shall guide them to Our own paths,¹⁰⁷ and surely Allah is with the righteous.

morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matt. 6: 24-34).

The background of these discourses of the Qur'ān and the Gospel is the same. There always comes a stage in the way of the propagation of the Truth when the follower of the Truth is left with no alternative but to stake his very life only with trust in Allah, regardless of the support and means of the material world. In these conditions, those who are too calculating about the possibilities of the future and seeking guarantees of the safety of life and assurance of provisions cannot do anything. Indeed, such conditions are changed only by the efforts and power of those who rise fearlessly in face of every danger and are even prepared to risk their very lives. It is all due to their sacrifices that ultimately the Word of Allah is raised high and all other words and creeds stand humbled and subdued before it.

100. From here the discourse is again directed to the disbelievers of Makkah.

101. Here the word *al-hamdu-lillah* (Praise be to Allah) gives two meanings: (1) "When all this is done by Allah, then He alone is worthy of all praise, and none else"; and (2) "Thank God that you yourselves also admit this."

102. That is "The reality of it is no more than the children's engaging in a sport and pastime for a while, and then returning home. The one has become a king here, has not become a king in reality but

is only playing the king. A time comes when his play ends, and he leaves the royal throne as empty-handed as he was when he had entered the world. Similarly, no phase of life here is enduring and lasting. Everyone is playing his part only temporarily for a limited time. Those who are charmed by the short-lived triumphs of this life and are able to collect some means of enjoyment and pleasure and of glory and grandeur by losing their conscience and faith, are only engaged in a pastime. What will these toys profit them when after amusing themselves with these for a score or three score and ten years in the world they will enter through the gate of death empty-handed into the Next World of eternal life and find their same allurements to have caused them an everlasting affliction?"

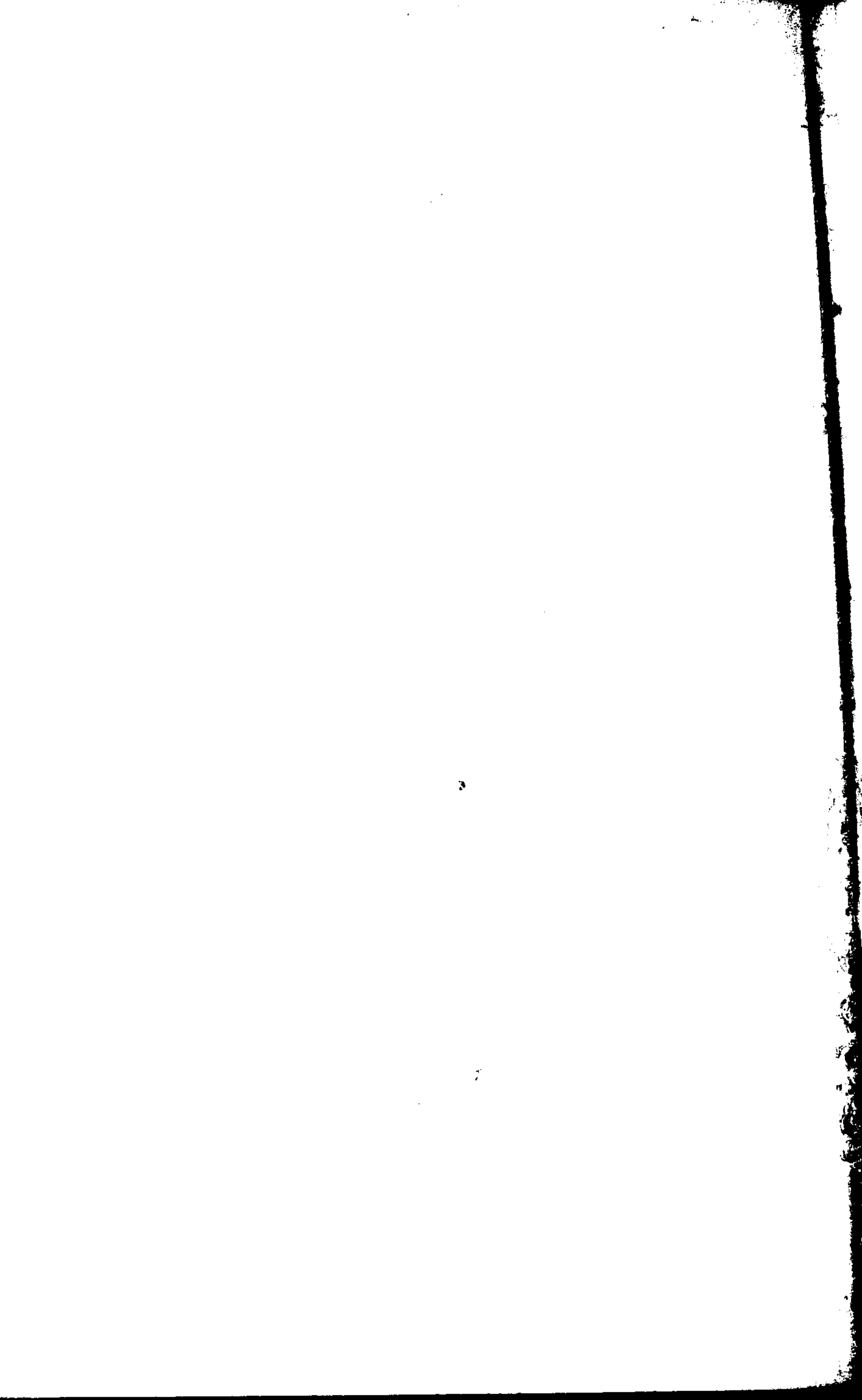
103. That is, "If these people had known the reality that the life of this world is only a period of preparation for the test, and the real life for man, which is everlasting, is the life hereafter, they would not have wasted this preparatory period in sport and merry-making, but would instead have utilized each moment of it in works conducive to better results in the eternal life of the Hereafter."

104. For explanation, see E.N.'s 29 and 41 of Sūrah Al-An'ām; E.N.'s 29 and 31 of Sūrah Yūnus and E.N. 84 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'il.

105. That is, "Has the City of Makkah, in whose surroundings they enjoy perfect safety and security, been made a sacred place by some Lāt or Hubal? Was it possible for a god or goddess to have secured this place against all sorts of mischief and violence for 2,500 years or so, in a strife-ridden land like Arabia? Who could then keep and maintain its sacredness and sanctity except Us?"

106. That is, "The Prophet has made a claim to Prophethood, and you have denied him. Now there can be only two alternatives: If the Prophet has made a false claim in the name of Allah, there can be no one more wicked than he, and if you have belied a true Prophet, there can be no one more wicked than you."

107. The word *mujāhadah* has already been explained in E.N. 8 above. There it was said that a person who exerts will exert for his own good (v. 6.). Here it is being reassured that Allah does not leave alone those who strive in His cause sincerely, even at the risk of a conflict with the entire world, but He helps and guides them and opens for them ways towards Himself. He teaches them at every step the way of winning His approval and good-will and He shows them the light at every turning point to discriminate between the Right Way and the wrong ways of life. In short, Allah helps and succours and guides them according to their sincerity and intensity of desire for goodness.



XXX

AR-RŪM الرُّوم

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XXX

AR-RŪM الرُّوم

INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name Ar-Rūm from the second verse in which the words *ghulibat-ir-Rūm* have occurred.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of this Sūrah is determined absolutely by the historical event that has been mentioned at the outset. It says: "The Romans have been vanquished in the neighbouring land." In those days the Byzantine occupied territories adjacent to Arabia were Jordan, Syria and Palestine, and in these territories the Romans were completely overpowered by the Iranians in 615 A.D. Therefore, it can be said with absolute certainty that this Sūrah was sent down in the same year, and this was the year in which the migration to Ḥabash took place.

Historical Background

The prediction made in the initial verses of this Sūrah is one of the most outstanding evidences of the Qur'ān's being the Word of Allah and the Holy Prophet Mūḥammad's being a true Messenger of Allah. Let us have a look at the historical background relevant to the verses.

Eight years before the Holy Prophet's advent as a Prophet the Byzantine Emperor Maurice was overthrown by Phocus, who captured the throne and became king. Phocus first got the Emperor's five sons executed in front

of him, and then got the Emperor also killed and hung their heads in a thoroughfare in Constantinople. A few days after this he had the empress and her three daughters also put to death. The event provided Khusrau Parvez, the Sassanid king of Iran, a good moral excuse to attack Byzantium. For Emperor Maurice had been his benefactor; with his help he had got the throne of Iran. Therefore, he declared that he would avenge his godfather's and his children's murder upon Phocus, the usurper. So, he started war against Byzantium in 603 A.D. and within a few years, putting the Phocus armies to rout in succession, he reached Edessa (modern, Urfa) in Asia Minor, on the one hand, and Aleppo and Antioch in Syria, on the other. When the Byzantine ministers saw that Phocus could not save the country, they sought the African governor's help, who sent his son, Heraclius, to Constantinople with a strong fleet. Phocus was immediately deposed and Heraclius made emperor. He treated Phocus as he had treated Maurice. This happened in 610 A.D., the year the Holy Prophet was appointed to Prophethood.

The moral excuse for which Khusrau Parvez had started the war was no more valid after the deposition and death of Phocus. Had the object of his war really been to avenge the murder of his ally on Phocus for his cruelty, he would have come to terms with the new Emperor after the death of Phocus. But he continued the war, and gave it the colour of a crusade between Zoroastrianism and Christianity. The sympathies of the Christian sects (*i.e.* Nestorians and Jacobians, etc.) which had been excommunicated by the Roman ecclesiastical authority and tyrannized for years also went with the Magian (Zoroastrian) invaders, and the Jews also joined hands with them; so much so that the number of the Jews who enlisted in Khusrau's army rose up to 26,000.

Heraclius could not stop this storm. The very first news that he received from the East after ascending the

throne was that of the Iranian occupation of Antioch. After this Damascus fell in 613 A.D. Then in 614 A.D. the Iranians occupying Jerusalem played havoc with the Christian world. Ninety thousand Christians were massacred and the Holy Sepulchre was desecrated. The Original Cross on which, according to the Christian belief, Jesus had died was seized and carried to Madā'in. The chief priest Zachariah was taken prisoner and all the important churches of the city were destroyed. How puffed up was Khusrau Parvez at this victory can be judged from the letter that he wrote to Heraclius from Jerusalem. He wrote: "From Khusrau, the greatest of all gods, the master of the whole world : To Heraclius, his most wretched and most stupid servant: 'You say that you have trust in your Lord. Why didn't then your Lord save Jerusalem from me?' "

Within a year after this victory the Iranian armies overran Jordan, Palestine and the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, and reached the frontiers of Egypt. In those very days another conflict of a far greater historical consequence was going on in Makkah. The believers in One God, under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), were fighting for their existence against the followers of *shirk* under the command of the chiefs of the Quraish, and the conflict had reached such a stage that in 615 A.D., a substantial number of the Muslims had to leave their homes and take refuge with the Christian kingdom of Ḥabash, which was an ally of the Byzantine Empire. In those days the Sassanid victories against Byzantium were the talk of the town, and the pagans of Makkah were delighted and were taunting the Muslims to the effect: "Look! the fire-worshippers of Iran are winning victories and the Christian believers in Revelation and Prophethood are being routed everywhere. Likewise, we, the idol-worshippers of Arabia, will exterminate you and your religion."

These were the conditions when this Sūrah of the

Qur'ān was sent down, and in it a prediction was made, saying: "The Romans have been vanquished in the neighbouring land and within a few years after their defeat, they shall be victorious. And it will be the day when the believers will rejoice in the victory granted by Allah." It contained not one but two predictions: First, the Romans shall be victorious; and second, the Muslims also shall win a victory at the same time. Apparently, there was not a remote chance of the fulfilment of the either prediction in the next few years. On the one hand, there were a handful of the Muslims, who were being beaten and tortured in Makkah, and even till eight years after this prediction there appeared no chance of their victory and domination. On the other, the Romans were losing more and more ground every next day. By 619 A.D. the whole of Egypt had passed into Sassanid hands and the Magian armies had reached as far as Tripoli. In Asia Minor they beat and pushed back the Romans to Bosphorus, and in 617 A.D. they captured Chalcedon (modern, Kadikoy) just opposite Constantinople. The Emperor sent an envoy to Khusrau, praying that he was ready to have peace on any terms, but he replied, "I shall not give protection to the emperor until he is brought in chains before me and gives up obedience to his crucified god and adopts submission to the fire-god." At last, the Emperor became so depressed by defeat that he decided to leave Constantinople and shift to Carthage (modern, Tunis). In short, as the British historian Gibbon says, even seven to eight years after this prediction of the Qur'ān, the conditions were such that no one could even imagine that the Byzantine Empire would ever gain an upper hand over Iran. Not to speak of gaining domination, no one could hope that the Empire, under the circumstances, would even survive.¹

When these verses of the Qur'ān were sent down, the disbelievers of Makkah made great fun of them, and

1. Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II, p. 788, Modern Library, New York.

Ubayy bin Khalaf bet Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr ten camels if the Romans became victorious within three years. When the Holy Prophet came to know of the bet, he said, "The Qur'ān has used the words *bid'ī sinīn*, and the word *bid'* in Arabic applies to a number upto ten. Therefore, make the bet for ten years and increase the number of camels to a hundred." So, Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr spoke to Ubayy again and bet a hundred camels for ten years.

In 622 A.D. as the Holy Prophet migrated to Madīnah, the Emperor Heraclius set off quietly for Trabzon from Constantinople via the Black Sea and started preparations to attack Iran from rear. For this he asked the Church for money, and Pope Sergius lent him the Church collections on interest, in a bid to save Christianity from Zoroastrianism. Heraclius started his counter attack in 623 A.D. from Armenia. Next year, in 624 A.D., he entered Azerbaijan and destroyed Clorumia, the birth-place of Zoroaster, and ravaged the principal fire-temple of Iran. Great are the powers of Allah! This was the very year when the Muslims achieved a decisive victory at Badr for the first time against the *mushriks*. Thus both the predictions made in Sūrah Rūm were fulfilled simultaneously within the stipulated period of ten years.

The Byzantine forces continued to press the Iranians hard and in the decisive battle at Nineveh (627 A.D.) they dealt them the hardest blow. They captured the royal residence of Dastagerd, and then pressing forward reached right opposite to Ctesiphon, capital of Iran in those days. In 628 A.D. in an internal revolt, Khusrau Parvez was imprisoned and 18 of his sons were executed in front of him and a few days later he himself died in the prison. This was the year when the peace treaty of Ḥudaibiya was concluded, which the Qur'ān has termed as "the supreme victory", and in this very year Khusrau's son, Qubād II, gave up all the occupied Roman territories, restored the True Cross and made peace with Byzantium. In 628 A.D.,

the Emperor himself went to Jerusalem to instal the "Holy Cross" in its place, and in the same year the Holy Prophet entered Makkah for the first time after the *Hijrah* to perform the '*Umra-tul-Qadā'*'.

After this no one could have any doubt about the truth of the prophecy of the Qur'ān, with the result that most of the Arab polytheists accepted Islam. The heirs of Ubayy bin Khalaf lost their bet and had to give a hundred camels to Hadrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq. He took them before the Holy Prophet, who ordered that they be given away in charity, because the bet had been made at a time when gambling had not yet been forbidden by the *Sharī'ah*; now it was forbidden. Therefore, the bet was allowed to be accepted from the belligerent disbelievers, but instruction given that it should be given away in charity and should not be brought in personal use.

Theme and Subject-matter

The discourse begins with the theme that the Romans have been overcome and the people the world over think that the empire is about to collapse, but the fact is that within a few years the tables will be turned and the vanquished will again become victorious.

This introductory theme contains the great truth that man is accustomed to seeing only what is apparent and superficial. That which is behind the apparent and superficial he does not know. When in the petty matters of life, this habit to see only the apparent and superficial can lead man to misunderstandings and miscalculations, and when he is liable to make wrong estimates only due to lack of knowledge about "what will happen tomorrow", how stupendous will be his error if he risks his whole life-activity by placing reliance only upon what is visible and apparent with respect to his worldly life as a whole !

Then, from the question of the conflict between Byzantium and Iran the direction of the discourse turns to the theme of the Hereafter, and as far as verse 27, man has

been made to understand in different ways that the Hereafter is possible as well as rational and necessary; then for the sake of keeping the system of his life also stable and balanced it is absolutely necessary that he should plan and order his present life on the faith in the Hereafter; otherwise he will commit the same error as has always been the result of placing one's reliance only upon the apparent and the visible.

In this connection, the Signs of the universe which have been presented as evidence to prove the doctrine of the Hereafter are precisely the same which support the doctrine of *Tauhīd*. Therefore from verse 28 onward, the discourse turns to the affirmation of *Tauhīd* and the refutation of *shirk*, and it is stressed that the natural way of life for man is none else but to serve One God exclusively. *Shirk* is opposed to the nature of the universe as to the nature of man. Therefore, whenever man has adopted this deviation, chaos has resulted. Again here, an allusion has been made to the great chaos that had gripped the world on account of the war between the two major powers of the time, and it has been indicated that this chaos too, is the result of *shirk*, and all the nations who were ever involved in mischief and chaos in the history of mankind were also *mushriks*.

In conclusion, a parable has been presented to make the people understand that just as dead earth comes to life, all of a sudden, by a shower of rain sent by God and swells with vegetation and plant life, so is the case with the dead humanity. When God sends a shower of His mercy in the form of Revelation and Prophethood, it also gives a new life to mankind and causes it to grow and develop and flourish. Therefore: "If you take full advantage of this opportunity, the barren land of Arabia will bloom by Allah's mercy and the whole advantage will be yours. But if you do not take advantage of it, you will harm only yourselves. Then no regret will avail and no opportunity will be provided to make amends."



الرَّؤْمِ ۝ غَلَبَتِ الرَّؤْمُ ۝ فِي آدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلِبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ ۝
 فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ ۝ إِنَّ اللَّهَ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝
 بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۝ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ
 اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ
 الدُّنْيَا ۝ وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُونَ ۝ أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ ۝ مَا
 خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۝
 وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَائِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُونَ ۝ أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۝ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَ
 أَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ
 فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ۝ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
 الَّذِينَ آسَأُوا السُّؤَالَ ۝ أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ۝
 اللَّهُ يَبْدُو الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ۝ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ
 يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَائِهِمْ شُفَعَاؤُا وَكَانُوا
 بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ كٰفِرِينَ ۝ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُنْفِرُونَ ۝ فَأَمَّا
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَهُمْ فِي رَوْضَةٍ يُحْبَرُونَ ۝ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ

XXX

AR-RŪM الرُّوم

Verses : 60

Revealed at Makkah

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

Alif. Lām. Mīm. The Romans have been overcome in the neighbouring land and within a few years after their defeat, they shall be victorious.¹ Allah's is the authority before as well as afterwards.² And it will be the day when the believers will rejoice in the victory granted by Allah.³ Allah helps whomsoever He wills: He is the All-Mighty, the All-Merciful. This is Allah's promise: Allah never breaks His promise; but most people do not know. 1-6

The people only know the outward aspect of the worldly life, and of the Hereafter they are heedless.⁴ Have they never reflected in their own selves?⁵ Allah has created the earth and the heavens and all that lies between them, with the truth, and only for an appointed term;⁶ but most people disbelieve in the meeting with their Lord.⁷ And have they never travelled in the earth that they could see the end of those who have gone before them?⁸ They were mightier than these in strength: they tilled the land⁹ and built more on it than these people have.¹⁰ Their Messengers came to them with clear Signs;¹¹ then it was not Allah Who was unjust to them, but it was they who were being unjust to themselves.¹² At last, evil was the end of those who had committed evil because they had denied the Revelations of Allah and scoffed at them. 7-10

Allah originates the creation; then He it is Who will repeat it,¹³ and then to Him you will be returned. And when the Hour¹⁴ is established, the criminals will be dumb-founded;¹⁵ none of those whom they have set up as associates (with Allah) will intercede for them,¹⁶ and they will 11-16

even disown their associates.¹⁷ The Day the Hour is established, (mankind) on that Day will be separated into groups.¹⁸ Those who have believed and done good works, will be kept in a Garden,¹⁹ happy and rejoicing;²⁰ and those who have disbelieved and rejected Our Revelations and the meeting of the Hereafter,²¹ will be presented for punishment.

1. From what Ibn 'Abbās and the other Companions and their followers have said, it appears that the Muslims' sympathies in this war between Byzantium and Iran were with Byzantium and of the disbelievers of Makkah with Iran. This had several reasons. First, the Iranians had given it the colour of a crusade between Magianism and Christianity, and, apart from the object of political conquest, they were making it a means of spreading Magianism. In the letter that Khusrau Parvez wrote to the Emperor Heraclius after the conquest of Jerusalem, he had clearly mentioned his victory as a proof of the truth of Magianism. In principle, the Magian creed resembled the polytheistic creed of the people of Makkah, because the Magis too, were disbelievers of *Tauhid*: they believed in two gods and worshipped the fire. That is why the *mushriks* of Makkah were in sympathy with them. Contrary to them, the Christians, however corrupted their monotheism might be, still regarded belief in One God as the basis of religion, believed in the Hereafter and admitted Revelation and Prophethood as the source of guidance. Thus, their religion in principle resembled Islam, and therefore, the Muslims were naturally in sympathy with them, and could not like that a polytheistic people should dominate them. Secondly, the people who believe in a previous Prophet before the advent of a new Prophet are naturally regarded and counted as Muslims until the message of the new Prophet reaches them and they clearly discard it. (Please see E.N. 73 of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ also). At that time only five to six years had passed since the Holy Prophet's advent as a Prophet and his message had not yet reached outside Arabia. Therefore, the Muslims did not look upon the Christians as disbelievers, but they certainly regarded the Jews as disbelievers because they had rejected the Prophet Jesus (may peace be upon him) to be a Prophet. Thirdly, the Christians from the very beginning had been treating the Muslims with sympathy as already mentioned above in Al-Qaṣaṣ: 52-55, and in Al-Mā'idah : 82-85, and many of them were even accepting the message of the Truth with an open heart. Then, the way the Christian king of Ḥabash had given refuge to the Muslims on their migration there and turned down the demand of the disbelievers of

Makkah to return them, also required that the Muslims should wish the Christians well as against the Magians.

2. That is, "When the Iranians became victorious first, it did not mean that the Lord of the worlds, God forbid, had been humbled and when the Romans will gain victory afterwards, it will not mean that Allah's lost kingdom will be restored to Him. Sovereignty in any case belongs to Allah. Allah gave victory to the side that became victorious first, and Allah will give victory to the side that will gain victory afterwards. For no one in His Kingdom can achieve domination solely by his own power. He whom He raises, rises and he whom He causes to fall, falls."

3. Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Sa'īd Khudrī, Sufyān Thaurī, Suddī and others have stated that the Romans' victory against the Iranians and the Muslims' victory at Badr against the polytheists took place almost at the same time. The Muslims, therefore, were doubly pleased. The same is supported by the histories of Byzantium and Iran. 624 A.D. is the year in which the Battle of Badr was fought and the same is the year in which the Byzantine Emperor destroyed the birth-place of Zoroaster and ravaged the principal fire-temple of Iran.

4. That is, "Although there are plenty of Signs and evidences which point to the Hereafter, and there is no reason why one should be heedless of it, yet the people are being heedless of it due to their own short-sightedness. They only see the apparent and the outward aspect of the worldly life and are unaware of what is hidden behind it; otherwise there has been no slackness on the part of God to warn them of it."

5. This in itself is a strong argument for the Hereafter. It means this: "If these people had reflected over their own selves, apart from the external phenomena, they would have found in themselves the arguments which prove the necessity of a second life after the present life. There are three special characteristics of man which distinguish him from the other creations on the earth: (1) The earth and the countless things around it have been subjected for him, and he has been granted vast powers to exploit them. (2) He has been left free to choose a way of life for himself. He can follow the way of belief or disbelief, obedience or sin, virtue or vice, as he likes. Any way of life, right or wrong, that he chooses, he is helped to follow it and allowed to use and exploit all the means and resources provided by God, whether the way chosen is of God's obedience or of His disobedience. (3) An innate moral sense has been placed in him, by which he discriminates between the voluntary and the involuntary actions; he judges the voluntary acts as good and bad, and decides spontaneously that a good act ought to be rewarded and an evil act ought to be punished.

These three characteristics which are found in man's own self serve

as a pointer to the fact that there must be a time when man should be called to account for his deeds, when he should be asked how he used the powers delegated to him over what he had been given in the world, when it should be seen whether he had adopted the right way or the wrong way by use of the freedom of choice given to him, when his voluntary acts should be judged, and good acts be rewarded and evil acts punished. This time inevitably can come only after man's life-activity has ceased and the account-book of his actions closed, and not before it. And this time should necessarily come only when the account-book of not one man or of one nation but of all mankind has closed. For on the passing away of one man or of one nation the influence that he or it has generated by his or its acts does not cease to operate. The good or bad influence left by him should also be credited to his account. How can accountability be carried out and full rewards and punishments given with justice unless the influences are allowed to run their full course? Thus, man's own self testifies that the position he occupies in the world by itself demands that after his present life there should be another life when a Court should be established, his life-record examined justly and every person rewarded or punished according to his deeds.

6. In this sentence, two more arguments have been given for the Hereafter. It says that if man makes a deep observation of the system of the universe, he will see two things very outstanding about it: First, that the universe has been created with the truth. It is not a plaything of a child, which he might have made to amuse himself, and whose making and un-making might be meaningless. But it is a serious system whose every particle testifies that it has been created with great wisdom, its each component has a law underlying it, and everything in it has a purpose behind it. Man's whole social and economic life and all his sciences and arts are a witness that whatever man has done in the world became possible only because he was able to discover the laws working behind everything and the purpose for which it was made. Had he been placed as a puppet in a lawless and purposeless toy-house, no science and no civilization and social life could be conceived. Now, how does it stand to reason that the Wise Being Who has created this world with such wisdom and design and Who has placed in it a creation like man, who is endowed with great mental and physical capabilities, powers and authority, freedom of action and choice, moral sense and entrusted with unlimited means and resources of the world, would have created him without a purpose and design? That man would live a full life involving both goodness and evil, justice and injustice, virtue and vice, and end up in the dust, and his good and evil acts will not bear any fruit? That each act of man will-

influence his own life as well as the lives of thousands of other men like himself and countless other things in the world, for good or for evil, and the whole record of his life-activity will be just set aside after his death, without accountability?

The other thing that becomes apparent after a deep observation of the system of the universe is that nothing here is immortal. Everything has an age appointed for it after attaining which it dies and expires, and the same is the case with the universe as a whole. All the forces that are working here are limited. They can work only till an appointed term and they have inevitably to run out in time, and this system has to end. In the ancient days the philosophers and scientists who said that the world was eternal and everlasting could have their way, due mainly to lack of knowledge. But modern science almost definitely has cast its vote in favour of the God-worshippers in the debate that had been going on since centuries between them and the atheists regarding the eternal and the temporal nature of the world. Now the atheists are left with no leg to stand on. They cannot claim on the basis of reason and knowledge that the world has existed since eternity and will exist for ever and there is going to be no resurrection. The ancient materialistic creed rested on the belief that matter was indestructible, only its form could be changed, but after every change matter remained matter and no increase or decrease occurred in its quantity. Therefore, it was inferred that this material world had neither a beginning nor an end. But now the discovery of the atomic energy has demolished the entire materialistic edifice. Now it has come to light that energy changes into matter, and matter changes back into energy with the result that nothing persists, neither form nor appearance. The Second Law of Thermodynamics has proved that this material world has neither existed since eternity nor will last till eternity. It certainly began in time and has to end in time. Therefore, it is no longer possible to deny the Hereafter even according to science. And obviously, when science has surrendered, how will philosophy stand to deny the Hereafter?

7. "Disbelieve...meeting": disbelieve that they have to appear before their Lord after death.

8. This is an historical argument for the Hereafter. It means this: "The Hereafter has not been denied only by a couple of the people in the world, but a large number of them have been involved in this disbelief in human history. Even there have been entire nations which either denied it altogether or lived heedless of it, or invented such false beliefs about life-after-death as rendered the concept of the Hereafter meaningless. Then the continuous experience of history reveals that in whatever form the Hereafter has been denied, its inevitable result has been

that the people became corrupted morally, they lived irresponsible lives, they transgressed all limits of tyranny and wickedness, which became the cause of the destruction of one nation after the other. Does not this experience of thousands of years of history, which has been faced by human generations successively, prove that the Hereafter is a reality whose denial is fatal to man? Man has come to believe in gravitation only because he has always experienced and seen material things falling to the ground. He has recognized poison to be poison only because whoever took poison died. Similarly, when the denial of the Hereafter has always led to the corruption of morals for man, is not this experience enough to teach the lesson that the Hereafter is a reality, and to live one's life heedless of it is dangerous?

9. The words *athār-ul-arḍ* in the original may either mean to plough the land for cultivation, or to dig the earth for taking out canals, underground water channels, minerals, etc.

10. This contains an answer to the argument of those who regard mere material progress as the sign of a nation's being righteous. They argue like this: "How is it possible that Allah will make fuel of Hell those people who have exploited the resources of the earth on such a large scale, who have constructed wonderful works on the earth and given birth to grand civilizations?" The Qur'ān refutes this argument, thus: "Such works of construction have been built before also by many nations on a large scale. Then, have you not seen that those nations have perished along with their civilization and their grand and magnificent "works"? There is no reason why the Law of God that has so treated in the world the mere material progress of a people lacking the right belief and conduct, will not treat them likewise in the Next World and make them fuel of Hell."

11. That is, "They came with such Signs as were sufficient for anyone to be convinced of their being the true Prophets." The mention of the coming of the Prophets in this context implies this: "On the one hand, there are evidences in man's own self, and in the universe around him, and in the continuous experience of human history, and, on the other, there also came such Prophets, one after the other, who showed clear Signs of their being true Prophets and warned (the people) that the Hereafter is sure to come."

12. That is, "The destruction that overtook those nations afterwards was not due to Allah's being unjust to them but due to the injustice they had done to themselves. The person (or persons) who neither thinks rightly himself nor adopts the right attitude by listening to others, will be himself responsible for his evil end if he meets destruc-

tion. God cannot be blamed for this, for God has not only made arrangements for conveying to man the knowledge of the reality through His Books and His Prophets, but also blessed man with the intellectual resources and powers by exploiting which he can always judge the authenticity of the knowledge brought by the Prophets and the Divine Books. Had God deprived man of this guidance and these resources and he had to meet with the consequences of following a wrong way, then doubtlessly could God have been blamed for injustice."

13. Though this thing has been put forward as a claim, it contains the basis of the claim too. Common sense testifies that the One Who can originate creation, can reproduce the same creation far more easily. The origination of the creation is an actuality, which exists before everybody, and the disbelievers and the *mushriks* also admit that this is the work of Allah alone. Now it will be clearly absurd on their part to think that God Who has originated this creation, cannot reproduce it."

14. "The Hour": the Hour of returning to Allah and appearing before Him.

15. The word *iblās* in the Text means to be dumbfounded on account of a sudden shock and despair, to be confounded on finding oneself in a hopeless situation, to stand aghast on finding no means of help and support. When this word is used for a culprit, it depicts a person who is caught red-handed, who then finds no way to escape, nor expects to save himself by offering a plea in self-defence; therefore, he stands dumb and dejected and depressed.

One should also understand that "the criminals" here does not only imply those people, who have committed murders and thefts and robberies, etc. in the world, but all those who have rebelled against God, refused to accept the guidance and teachings of His Messengers, denied the accountability of the Hereafter, or lived heedless of it, and have been worshipping others than God in the world, or their own selves, whether or not, besides this basic deviation, they also committed those acts, which are commonly called crimes. Besides, it includes those people also, who in spite of believing in God and His Messengers and the Hereafter, have knowingly disobeyed their Lord and persisted in their rebellious conduct till the end. When these people will suddenly come back to life in the Hereafter, against their expectations, and will find that they are confronted with the second life, which they had denied, or ignored, in their life-activity in the world, they will stand dumbfounded as has been depicted in the words: *yublīsul-mujrimūn*.

16. "Associates" (*shurakā'*) includes three kinds of beings:

[Contd. on p. 198

كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ فَأُولَئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾
 فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ
 الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَ مِنْ
 آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ
 أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً
 وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ وَاجْتِلَافُ السِّنِّكُمْ وَالْوَالِدَاتُ إِذَا فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَ
 مِنْ آيَاتِهِ مَنَامُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَاؤُكُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
 لِقَوْمٍ يُسْمِعُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ
 السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُحْيِي بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
 يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَقُومَ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ بِأَمْرِهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ
 دَعْوَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
 كُلُّ لَهٌ قُنُوتٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ
 وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَى فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾ ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ
 مَثَلًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَا رَزَقْتُمْ
 فَإِنَّكُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ
 لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَ هُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَمَنْ
 يَهْدِي مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ تُصْرِينِ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ

So,²² glorify Allah²³ in the evening and in the morning: 17-19
 praise is due to Him alone in the heavens and the earth;
 and (glorify Him) in the afternoon and at the declining
 of the day.²⁴ He brings out the living from the dead and
 the dead from the living, and gives life to the earth
 after its death.²⁵ Likewise, you too, shall be taken out (of
 the state of death).

Of His²⁶ Signs is this that He has created you from 20
 dust; then behold, you are men who are multiplying (in
 the earth).²⁷

And of His Signs is this that He has created for you 21
 wives from your own species²⁸ that you may find peace with
 them,²⁹ and created love and mercy between you.³⁰ Surely
 in this there are many Signs for those who reflect.

And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the 22
 earth³¹ and the difference of your tongues and colours.³²
 Surely in this there are many Signs for the learned.

And of His Signs is your sleep by night and by day and 23
 your seeking of His bounty.³³ Surely in this there are many
 Signs for those who pay heed.

And of His Signs is this that He shows you the lightn- 24
 ing, for fear as well as for hope,³⁴ and He sends down
 rainwater from the sky and thereby gives life to the earth
 after its death.³⁵ Surely in this there are many Signs for
 those who use their common sense.

And of His Signs is this that the Heaven and the Earth 25-27
 stand firm by His Command;³⁶ then as soon as He summons
 you out of the earth, you shall come out at one call.³⁷
 Whoever exist in the heavens and the earth, are His
 servants; all are obedient to Him. He it is Who originates
 the creation; then He alone will repeat it, and this is easier
 for Him.³⁸ His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens
 and the earth, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

He draws³⁹ out a comparison for you from your own 28-29
 selves: Are there among the slaves that you possess any such
 slaves also who may be sharing with you equally the

wealth that We have given you, and you fear them as you fear one another among yourselves?⁴⁰—Thus do We present the Revelations clearly for those who use their common sense. But the wrongdoers are following their own desires, without any knowledge. Now, who can guide the one whom Allah has led astray?⁴¹ Such people can have no helper.

Contd. from p. 195]

(1) The angels, prophets, saints, martyrs and the righteous men, to whom the polytheists assigned divine attributes and powers in different ages and whom they worshipped as gods. On Resurrection Day, they will say to their worshippers, "You did whatever you did without our consent, rather against our teachings and guidance. Therefore, we have nothing to do with you. Do not place any hope in us that we will intercede for you before Allah Almighty."

(2) Inanimate things like the moon, the sun, the planets, trees, stones, animals, etc. The polytheists worshipped them as gods, prayed to them, but the poor things themselves were unaware that the vicegerent of Allah was worshipping them so humbly and devotedly. Evidently, none of these also will come forward to intercede for him.

(3) The arch-criminals, who by deception and fraud, or by use of force, compelled the servants of God to worship them, e.g. Satan, false religious guides, and tyrants and despots. They themselves will be in trouble there. Not to speak of interceding for others, they will rather try to prove before God that their worshippers and followers were themselves responsible for their crimes, and therefore, they should not be made to bear the burden of their deviation. Thus, the polytheists there will not get any intercession from anywhere.

17. That is, "The polytheists will themselves admit that they had wrongly held them as associates of God. They will realize that none of them really had any share in Godhead. Therefore, in the Hereafter they will disown the *shirk* on which they insist in the world."

18. That is, "All communities and groups that have been formed in the world on the basis of race, country, language, tribe and clan, and economic and political interests, will break, and the people will be re-grouped on the basis of true belief, morality and character. On the one hand, all the believing and righteous people will be separated from all the nations of mankind and put in one group, and on the other, people professing every false ideology and committing every kind of crime in the world will be sorted out severally from the multitudes of mankind and put into separate groups. In other words, the thing which

Islam regards as the real basis of separation and union in the world and which the worshippers of ignorance refuse to accept, will become the basis of separation and union in the Hereafter. Islam says that the real thing which joins men together or divides them is the belief and morality. Those who believe and build the system of life on Divine guidance are one community, whether they belong to any race, any country and any region. The two cannot belong to one nation. They can neither walk together on a common path of life in the world, nor can meet with the same end in the Hereafter. From the world to the Hereafter they tread separate paths and have separate destinations. Contrary to this, the worshippers of falsehood have been insisting in every age, and still insist, that mankind should be classified and grouped on the bases of race and country and language. The people who have a common race and country and language should constitute a separate nation, regardless of their religion and belief, and should offer a common front against the other similar nations. And this nation should have such a system of life which should bind the followers of *Tauhid* and the polytheists and the atheists together. The same was the concept of Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab and the chiefs of the Quraish. That is why they accused the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's peace be upon him) again and again of having stirred up divisions in their nation. That is why the Qur'ān is warning that the groups made in the world on wrong bases will ultimately break and mankind will be permanently divided on the basis of the belief and the philosophy of life and morality and character on which Islam wants to build it in the world. The people who do not have a common destination cannot follow a common way of life.

19. "A Garden": A garden of bliss and perfect happiness as a reward and source of everlasting joy.

20. The word *yu'barūn* in the original implies this: "They will be lodged in it with honour, will remain happy and be provided with every kind of pleasure."

21. One thing here is noteworthy. "Good works" have been mentioned as a necessary adjunct of the "faith", which will earn one the blissful Garden, but no mention has been made of the "evil acts" while mentioning the evil end of "disbelief". This clearly indicates that disbelief by itself is enough to mar the destiny of a person, whether it is accompanied by the evil act or not.

22. "So", here, implies this: "When you have come to know the good results of belief and righteous acts and the evil consequences of disbelief and denial of the Truth, you should adopt the following conduct." It also means this: "By holding the life hereafter to be impossible,

the polytheists and disbelievers are, in fact, holding Allah to be helpless. Therefore, as against them, you should glorify Allah, and proclaim that He is free from this weakness." This Command has been addressed to the Holy Prophet and through him to all the believers.

23. "To glorify Allah" means to proclaim Allah's being free from and exalted above the defects and faults and weaknesses, which the *mushriks* ascribe to Him due to their *shirk* and denial of the Hereafter. The best form of this proclamation and expression is the Prayer. That is why Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, Ibn Zaid and other commentators say that here "to glorify" means to offer the prescribed Prayer. A clear indication in favour of this commentary is contained in the verse itself. It lays down certain definite times for the glorification of Allah. Evidently, if it was meant to instil the belief that Allah is free from all defects and weaknesses, there should be no question of the restriction of the times of the morning and evening, and the early and late afternoon, for a Muslim should always have this belief. Similarly, if it was meant to teach glorifying Allah merely verbally, it should be meaningless to specify the times, for a Muslim should express Allah's glory at all times. Therefore, inevitably the Command to glorify Allah with the restriction of the times points to its particular practical form which is none other than the Prayer.

24. This verse clearly points to the times of the *Fajr* (morning), *Maghrib* (evening), *Asr* (late afternoon) and the *Zuhr* (early afternoon) Prayers. Besides this, the other allusions made to the times of the Prayer in the Qur'ān are as follows:

"Establish the *Ṣalāt* from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and be particular about the recital of the Qur'ān at dawn." (Banī Isrā'īl: 78)

"Establish the *Ṣalāt* at the two ends of the day and in the early part of the night." (Hūd: 114).

"And glorify your Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him again during the hours of the night and at the extremes of the day." (Ṭā Hā: 130)

The first of these verses tells that the times of the Prayer are from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night ('*Ishā*') after which is the time of the morning Prayer (*Fajr*). In the second verse, the "two ends of the day" imply the times of the morning (*Fajr*) and the evening (*Maghrib*) Prayers, and "in the early part of the night" implies the time of '*Ishā*'. In the third verse, "before the rising of the sun" implies the *Fajr* time and "before its setting" the *Asr* time, and "during the hours of the night" implies the times of both the *Maghrib* and the '*Ishā*' Prayers; and

the "extremes of the day" are three: the morning, the declining of the sun and the evening. Thus, the Qur'ān at different places has pointed to the five Prayer times at which the Muslims the world over offer their Prayers. But, obviously, no one by merely reading these verses could have determined the Prayer times unless the divinely appointed teacher of the Qur'ān, the Holy Prophet himself, had given guidance to these by his word and deed.

Let us pause a while here and consider the boldness of the deniers of *Hadith*. They make fun of "offering the Prayer", and say that the Prayer that the Muslims offer today is not at all the thing prescribed by the Qur'ān. They assert that the Qur'ānic injunction to establish the *Ṣalāt* does not mean the offering of the Prayer but establishing the *Nizām-i Rubūbiyat* (Order of Providence). Ask them: "What is that novel order of Providence which can either be established before the rising of the sun or after the declining of the sun till the early hours of the night? And what is that order of Providence which is required to be established especially on Fridays? ("O believers when you hear the call to the Friday Prayer, hasten to the remembrance of Allah".—(LXII: 9). And what is that special kind of the order of Providence for establishing which one has first to wash one's face and the hands up to the elbows and the feet up to the ankles and wipe one's head with wet hands, otherwise one will not establish it? ("O believers, when you stand up to offer the *Ṣalāt*, you must wash your faces and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and wipe your heads with wet hands."—(V: 6). And what is this peculiarity of this order of Providence that one cannot establish it unless one has completely washed oneself after sexual intercourse? ("O believers, do not offer the Prayer . . . if you are unclean until you take your bath, except when passing on the way."—(IV: 43) And what is this odd thing that if one has touched the women, one will have to strike one's hands on pure dust and wipe thereby one's face and hands in case one does not find water, for the purpose of establishing this strange order of Providence? (" . . . or if you have touched women and you can find no water, then cleanse yourselves with pure dust: strike your palms on it and wipe your hands and faces with it."—(IV: 43). And what is this amazing order of Providence that while on a journey one should establish only half of it? ("When you go on a journey, there is no harm if you shorten the *Ṣalāt*."—(IV: 101) Then, what an odd thing that during a war half of the soldiers should fall out, carrying their weapons, in order to establish the order of Providence behind the *Imām*, and the other half should stick to their positions and continue fighting the enemy; then, when the first group has performed one *sajdah* behind the *Imām* in its effort to establish the "order of Providence" it should go to relieve the other group, which should

fall out and start establishing the "order of Providence" behind the *Imām*? ("And when you, O Prophet, are among the Muslims and are going to lead them in *Ṣalāt* (in a state of war), let a party of them stand behind you, carrying their weapons with them. When they have made their prostrations, they should fall back, and let another party of them, who have not yet offered their *Ṣalāt*, say it with you."—(IV : 102)

All these verses of the Qur'ān clearly indicate that to establish the *Ṣalāt* implies the Prayer that the Muslims offer everywhere in the world today. But the deniers of *Ḥadīth* seem to be bent upon changing the Qur'ān instead of changing themselves. The fact is that unless a person becomes wholly fearless of Allah, he cannot dare play with His Word as these people do. Or, only such a person can engage in a pastime like this with respect to the Qur'ān, who believes it is not Allah's Word, but intends to mislead the Muslims in the name of the Qur'ān. (See also E.N. 50 below in this connection).

25. That is, "How can that God Who is doing all this perpetually in front of your eyes, be helpless in raising man to life after death? He is causing absolutely dead matter to be discharged from living men and animals. He is ever bringing into existence countless animals and human beings by breathing life into dead matter, whereas the substances themselves which make up the bodies of the living beings are absolutely without life. He is making you witness the phenomenon that wherever water becomes available, lands previously lying barren start blooming and blossoming with animal and vegetable life. In spite of witnessing all this if a person thinks that the God Who is sustaining the universe will be helpless to raise man back to life after death, he is wholly devoid of the common sense. His mind's eyes do not see the clear realities gleaming from the manifestations which his head's eyes see."

26. It should be noted that from here to the end of verse 27, the Signs of Allah that are being mentioned point, on the one hand, to the possibility and occurrence of the life hereafter, in the context of the foregoing discourse, and on the other, the same Signs also point to the reality that this universe is neither God-less nor under many gods, but One God alone is its Creator, Disposer, Master and Ruler, except for Whom there should be no other deity of man. Thus, this section (vv. 20-27) is fully well connected with the discourse preceding it and the discourse following it.

27. That is, "The stuff from which man has been created is nothing but a few dead substances which are found in the earth, like carbon, calcium, sodium and a few other elements like them. With their combination a wonderful being, called man, has been raised up, and in him have been placed great powers of sentiments, consciousness, imagination,

none of which can be traced back to any of the constituent substances of his physical being. Then, not only has just one man so risen up by a mere accident, but in him has also been placed that wonderful procreative power by which millions and billions of human beings are coming continuously into being bearing the same physical structure and capabilities and possessing countless hereditary and personal characteristics. Therefore, O man! Does your intellect approve that this extremely wise creation has come into being of itself without the creative power of a Wise Creator? Can you say, being in your senses, that making a wonderful design of the creation of man and bringing it into effect and rendering the countless powers of the earth and heavens favourable and subservient to human life could be the result of the thinking and design of many gods? And will you be in your right senses when you think that the God Who has brought man into being from absolute nothingness, will not be able to raise the same man back to life after giving him death?"

28. That is, "The Creator's perfect wisdom is such that He has not created man in one sex only but in two sexes, which are identical in humanity, which have the same basic formula of their figure and form, but the two have been created with different physical structures, different mental and psychological qualities, and different emotions and desires. And then there has been created such a wonderful harmony between the two that each is a perfect counterpart of the other. The physical and psychological demands of the one match squarely with the physical and psychological demands of the other. Moreover, the Wise Creator is continuously creating the members of the two sexes in such a proportion since the dawn of the creation that in no nation and in no region has it ever happened that only boys or only girls may have been born. This is one thing in which human intelligence has absolutely no part to play. Man cannot at all influence the course of nature according to which girls continue to be born with the feminine qualities and the boys with the masculine qualities, which are perfectly complementary to each other, nor has he any means by which he may change the proportion in which men and women continue to be born everywhere in the world. The working of this system and arrangement so harmoniously and perpetually in the birth of millions and billions of human beings since thousands of years cannot be accidental either, nor the result of the common will of many gods. This is a clear indication of the reality that One Wise Creator and One only, in the beginning made a most appropriate design of a man and a woman by His Infinite Wisdom and Power and then made arrangements that precisely in accordance with that design countless men and countless women should be born along with their separate individual qualities in the right proportion."

29. That is, "This system has not come about by chance, but the Creator has brought it about deliberately with the object that the man should find fulfilment of the demands of his nature with the woman and the woman with the man, and the two should find peace and satisfaction in association and attachment with each other. This is the wise arrangement which the Creator has made the means of the survival of the human race, on the one hand, and of bringing the human civilization into existence, on the other. If the two sexes had been created on different patterns and designs, and the state of agitation which changes into peace and tranquillity only through union and attachment between the two had not been placed in each, the human race might have survived like sheep and goats, but there was no possibility of the birth of a civilization. Contrary to all other species of animal life, the fundamental factor that has helped create human civilization is that the Creator by His wisdom has placed a desire and a thirst and a longing in the two sexes for each other, which remains unsatisfied unless the two live in complete attachment and association with each other. This same desire for peace and satisfaction compelled them to make a home together. This same desire brought families and clans into being, and this same desire made social life possible for man. In the development of social life man's mental capabilities have certainly been helpful, but they were not its real motives. The real motivating force was the same longing with which man and woman were endowed and which compelled them to establish the "home". Can anyone possessed of common sense say that this masterpiece of wisdom has come about by chance through the blind forces of nature? Or, that it has been arranged so by many gods, and countless men and women have been continuously coming into being with the same natural longing since thousands of years? This is a Sign of the wisdom of One Wise Being, and of One only, which the people devoid of common sense only can refuse to acknowledge.

30. "Love" here means sexual love, which becomes the initial motive for attraction between man and woman, and then keeps them attached to each other. "Mercy" implies the spiritual relationship which gradually develops in the matrimonial life, by virtue of which they become kindly, affectionate and sympathetic towards each other; so much so that in old age sexual love falls into the background and the two partners in life prove to be even more compassionate towards each other than they were when young. These two are the positive forces which the Creator has created in man to support the initial longing of his nature. That longing and restlessness only seeks peace and satisfaction and brings the man and the woman into contact with each other. After

that these two forces emerge and bind the two strangers brought up in different environments so intimately together that the two remain attached to each other through every thick and thin of life. Evidently, this love and mercy which is being experienced by millions and millions of people in their lives, is not anything material, which may be weighed and measured, nor can it be traced back to any of the constituent elements of human body, nor the cause of its birth and growth found out in a laboratory. The only explanation of this can be that the human self has been endowed with it by a Wise Creator, Who has done so of His own will to serve a special purpose.

31. That is, "Their coming into existence from nothingness and their being established on an eternal law, and the functioning in them of innumerable forces in great harmony and equilibrium, contain many Signs of the reality that One Creator, and One only, has brought the entire universe into existence, and He alone is running this grand system. On the one hand, by reflecting over the origin of the initial energy that assumed the form of matter, then the transformation of the matter into so many elements, then the combination of the elements in a wonderful and wise proportion and coming into being of an awe-inspiring system of the universe, and then the functioning of this system since billions of centuries with such regularity and discipline, every unbiased mind will come to the conclusion that all this could not happen by mere chance, without the all-embracing will of an All-Knowing, All-Wise Creator. Then, on the other hand, if one sees that everything from the earth to the farthest stars in the universe is made up of the same basic elements and the same law of nature is working in it, every intellect, which is not stubborn, will certainly admit that this cannot be the result of the godhead of many gods but there is One God Who is the Creator and Sustainer of this whole universe."

32. That is, "Although your vocal chords are similar, and there is no difference in the structure of the mouth, the tongue and the brains, yet people speak different languages in different regions of the world. Even in the regions where the same language is spoken different dialects are spoken from city to city and from town to town. Moreover, the accent and pronunciation and the style of speech of every person is different from the other. Similarly, although the semen and the formula of your physical structure is the same, yet your colours are so different that, nations apart, even the colour of the two sons of the same parents is not exactly the same. In this verse, attention has been drawn only to two aspects, but if one looks around one will notice an infinite variety everywhere in the world. One will find countless differences in the species of man, animal, plants and other things in spite of the basic

uniformity in their different members; so much so that no member of the species is exactly identical with the other. Even the two leaves of a tree are not exactly alike. This shows that the world is not a factory in which automatic machines might be working and turning out things in mass production bearing the stamp of their own separate species. But in this factory there is a Master-Artist at work, Who gives individual attention to everything and produces it on a new design with new embellishments and proportions and qualities, and everything thus produced is unique in its own way. His inventive genius is turning out a new model of everything every moment, and His creative power abhors repeating the same design the second time. Anyone who sees this wonderful phenomenon with open eyes, can never be involved in the foolish misconception that the Maker of the universe has gone to sleep after having made it go. This is, on the contrary, a clear proof of the fact that He is ever engaged in His creative activity, and is giving individual attention to each and everything in His creation.

33. "To seek bounty" is to seek the livelihood. Though man generally sleeps at night and works for his living in the day, this is not a law. Many people also sleep in the day and work for their livelihood at night. That is why the night and the day both have been mentioned and it has been said: "In both day and night you sleep as well as work for your livelihood."

This also is a Sign which points to the design of the Wise Creator. Furthermore, it also points to the fact that He is not merely a Creator but also extremely Compassionate and Merciful to His creations, and is more anxious than the creation to meet its needs and requirements. Man cannot constantly labour but needs to have a rest of a few hours after every few hours of hard work so as to rebuild energy to take up work again. For this purpose, the Wise and Merciful Creator has not rested content with creating a feeling of fatigue and a desire for rest in man, but has placed in his nature a powerful urge for the "sleep", which without his will, even in spite of resistance from him, overpowers him automatically after every few hours of work and wakefulness, and compels him to have a few hours of rest, and leaves him as soon as the need has been fulfilled. Man has so far been unable to understand the nature and real causes of the sleep. This is something wholly innate, which has been placed in the nature and structure of man. Its being precisely according to the requirements of man is enough to testify that it is not anything accidental, but has been provided by a Wise Being in accordance with a purpose and plan. It is based on a clear wisdom and reason and purposefulness. Moreover, the sleep itself testifies that the One Who has placed this compulsive urge in man is a greater well-

wisher of man than man himself, otherwise man would have deliberately resisted the sleep and endeavoured to keep constantly awake and worked continuously hard and thus exhaust not only his work-power but also his vital powers.

Then, by using the word "seeking Allah's bounty" for the seeking of livelihood, allusion has been made to another series of the Signs. How could have man sought and found his livelihood if the innumerable and un-limited forces of the earth and heavens had not been put to work to provide means of the livelihood and supply countless resources for man to seek it in the earth? Not only this. Man could not have exploited these means and resources had he not been given appropriate limbs and suitable physical and mental capabilities for the purpose. Thus the ability in man to seek the livelihood and the presence of the resources of the livelihood outside of him, clearly indicate the existence of a Merciful and Beneficent God. An intellect which is not sick can never presume that all this has happened by chance, or is the manifestation of the godhead of many gods, or some merciless, blind force is responsible for these bounties and blessings.

34. That is, "Its thunder and lightning give hope that rain will come and help the crops, but at the same time they cause a fear that the lightning may strike somewhere, or heavy rain may fall, which may wash away everything."

35. This thing, on the one hand, points to the life hereafter, and on the other, proves that God exists, and there is One God alone, Who is controlling the earth and the heavens. Innumerable creatures of the earth live on the products that come out from the earth. These products depend on the productivity of the earth. The productivity depends on the rain, whether it directly falls on the earth, or its water gathers together on the surface of the earth, or takes the form of underground water channels or springs or wells, or freezes on the mountains and then flows down in the form of rivers. Then the rain depends on the heat of the sun, the change of seasons, atmospheric changes in temperature, circulation of the winds, and on the lightning, which causes the rain to fall as well as mixes a kind of natural manure in the rainwater. The establishment of a harmony and proportion between different things existing from the earth to the sky, their becoming favourable and subservient to a variety of aims and objects, and their remaining continuously and constantly favourable in perfect harmony for millions of million years cannot be the product of mere chance. Has it all happened without the all-embracing will and plan and wisdom of a Fashioner and Designer? And

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حِينَمَا فَطَرَتِ اللهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللهِ ذَلِكَ
 الدِّينُ الْقَيُّومُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَ
 آقِمْوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَ
 كَانُوا شِيعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ
 دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَقَهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ
 يَرْبِعُوا يَشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ لِيُكَفِّرُوا بِمَا اتَّبَعُوا فَمَتَّعُوا أَصْفَافًا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا
 عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ
 رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ
 يَقْنَطُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي
 ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْيَسِيرِينَ وَالْبَن
 السَّبِيلِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللهِ وَأَوْلِيكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾
 وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رَّبًّا لِيَرْبُتُوا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوا عِنْدَ اللهِ وَمَا آتَيْتُم
 مِّن زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْحِقُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اللهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ
 ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَّنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ
 مِثْلَ شَيْءٍ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا
 كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قُلْ
 سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
 مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ
 مِنَ اللهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَيْسَ كُفْرُوهٗ وَ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا

30-32

So,⁴² (O Prophet and the followers of the Prophet,) set your face sincerely and truly⁴³ towards this Faith,⁴⁴ and be steadfast on the Nature whereupon Allah has created mankind.⁴⁵ There can be no alteration in the Nature made by Allah.⁴⁶ This is the right and true Faith,⁴⁷ but most people do not know. (Be steadfast on this) turning wholly towards Allah,⁴⁸ and fear Him,⁴⁹ and establish the *Ṣalāt*,⁵⁰ and do not be of the *mushriks* who have set up their separate creeds and divided themselves into sects, each sect rejoicing in what it has.⁵¹

33-35

When an affliction befalls the people, they invoke their Lord, turning penitently towards Him;⁵² then when He makes them taste of His Mercy, some of them start committing *shirk*⁵³ so that they may show ingratitude for Our favours. Well, enjoy yourselves, for soon you shall know. Have We sent down to them an authority, which may testify to the truth of the *shirk* they are committing?⁵⁴

36-39

When We make the people taste mercy, they exult at it; and when an affliction befalls them on account of their own misdeeds, they grow despondent.⁵⁵ Do they not see that it is Allah Who gives abundantly to whom He wills and sparingly (to whom He wills)? Surely in this there are many Signs for those who believe.⁵⁶ Therefore, (O believers,) give to your relative his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer (his due).⁵⁷ This is the best way for those who seek Allah's goodwill: such alone will attain true success.⁵⁸ The interest that you give in order to increase the wealth of the people, does not increase in the sight of Allah;⁵⁹ and the *Zakāt* that you pay in order to win Allah's approval, its payers do indeed increase their wealth.⁶⁰

40-43

Allah⁶¹ it is Who created you, then provided for you,⁶² then He causes your death, and then He will bring you back to life. Is there among the associates you have set up (with Allah) anyone who can do any of these things?⁶³ Glorified is He and far exalted above the *shirk* these people commit. Mischief has appeared in the land and the sea on

account of men's own doings that He may make them taste some of their (evil) works: maybe they mend their ways.⁶⁴ (O Prophet,) say to them, "Go about in the land and see what has been the end of those who lived before (you). Most of them were *mushriks* (idolaters)."⁶⁵ So, (O Prophet,) set your face firmly towards the true Faith before that Day arrives of which there is no chance of being averted by Allah.⁶⁶ On that Day people will break asunder.

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is it not a proof of the fact that the Creator and Lord of the earth, the sun, the wind, the water, the heat and coolness is One and only One?

36. That is, "Not only have they come into being by His Command, but their continuous existence and the functioning in them of a grand workshop of life constantly is also due to His Command. If His Command does not sustain them even for a moment, the entire system should break down at once."

37. That is, "It is not at all difficult for the Creator and Controller of the universe to raise you back to life; for this He will have to make no preparation. His one call will be enough to raise and muster together from every corner of the earth all human beings who have been born since the beginning of creation and will be born in the future."

38. That is, "If it was not difficult for Him to create you in the first instance, how can it be difficult for Him to re-create you? Your first creation was not difficult for Him because your present existence is a living proof of that. Now it is simple common sense that the re-making of a thing should be relatively easier for the one who made it for the first time."

39. In the foregoing section, arguments have been given both for *Tauhid* and for the Hereafter; now the discourse turns to only *Tauhid*.

40. The *mushriks*, even after admitting that Allah is the Creator and Master of the earth and heavens and all that they contain, held some of His creatures as associates in His attributes and powers, and prayed to them, presented offerings and performed rites of worship before them. Their belief regarding their self-made associates is found in the words of the *Talbih* that they used to pronounce while going round the Ka'bah. They said: "Here I am, O Allah, here I am in Thy presence! Thou hast no partner except the partner who is Thy own. Thou art his owner as well as owner of what he owns." (Ṭabarānī on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās). Allah has refuted this kind of *shirk* in this verse. The argument is to this effect: "When you do not make your own slaves

partners in your wealth, how do you think and believe that Allah will make His creatures partners in His Godhead?" (For further details, see E.N. 62 of An-Nahl).

41. That is, "When a person neither thinks on the right lines himself, nor is prepared to listen to a well-wisher, his intellect comes under the curse of Allah. After this everything that can help a reasonable person to reach the Truth, only helps this stubborn and ignorant person to be involved more and more deeply in further deviation and error. This is what has been conveyed in the word "leading astray". When a truth-loving person invokes Allah for the grace of guidance, Allah creates for him maximum means of the guidance according to the sincerity of his invocation. And when a strayed person insists on his deviation, Allah creates for him the means which mislead him further and further away from the Truth."

42. This "so" implies that when the reality has become clear to you, and you have come to know that none but Allah is the Creator and Master and Sovereign of this universe and of man himself, then inevitably your conduct should be such as indicated in this verse.

43. "Set your face...truly": "Do not turn your face to any other direction after you have adopted this way of life. Then you should think like a Muslim and your likes and dislikes should be of a Muslim. Your values and standards should be the ones set by Islam and your character and conduct should bear the stamp of Islam, and the affairs of your individual and collective life should be ordered according to the way taught by Islam."

44. "This Faith": the Faith that the Qur'an presents, in which none but Allah is worthy of worship and obedience, in which none can be held as an associate of Allah in His Divinity, in His attributes and His powers and rights, in which man by his own free will chooses to order his life in accordance with the Guidance and Law of Allah.

45. That is, "All human beings have been created on the nature that none but One Allah is their Creator and Lord and Deity. You should be steadfast on this nature. If you adopt the attitude of independence, you will be following a way opposed to your nature, and if you serve and worship another besides Allah, then also you will be working against your nature."

This subject has been explained by the Holy Prophet in a number of *Aḥādīth*. According to Būkhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet said: "Every child who is born, is born on true human nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, etc. afterwards. Its example is of an animal which gives birth to complete and sound young ones—none is born with torn and cut off ears—but the *mushriks* tear

their ears afterwards on account of their superstitions of ignorance.”

According to another *Hadīth* reported in Musnad Aḥmad and Nasī'i, the Muslims in a war killed even the children of the enemy. When the Holy Prophet came to know of it, he became very angry, and said: “What has happened to the people that they have transgressed the limits and killed even the children?” A man said, “Sir, were they not the children of the *mushriks*?” The Holy Prophet replied: “Even the best of your people are the children of the *mushriks*!” Then he said: “Every living being is born on true nature: then when he becomes able to speak, his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian.”

In another *Hadīth* which has been reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Ayād bin Ḥimār-ul-Mujāshī'i, it has been related that one day the Holy Prophet said during an address: “My Lord says: ‘I had created all My servants on true Faith; then the satans came and led them astray from their Faith, and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I have sent down no authority’.”

46. That is, “God has made man His servant and created him only for his own service. This natural disposition of man cannot be altered, however hard one may try. Neither can man effect a change in his position of a servant, nor can anything other than God become his God in the real sense. Man may make for himself as many gods as he may please, but the fact remains that he is the servant of none but One God alone. Man by his own folly and ignorance may regard anyone as holder of Divine attributes and powers and take anyone as the maker and un-maker of his destiny, but the fact of the matter is that neither does anyone other than Allah possess Divine attributes nor His authority, nor has anyone else the power to make or mar the destiny of man.”

Another translation of this verse can be: “Do not effect any alteration in the Nature made by Allah.” That is, it is not right to corrupt and spoil the Nature on which Allah has created man.

47. “Right and true Faith”: To remain steadfast on one's true Nature.

48. That is, “Whoever has adopted an attitude of independence and freedom and turned away from his true Lord, and whoever has adopted service of another than Allah and proved to be disloyal to his real and true Lord, should desist from this, and return to the service of the One God, Whose real servant he is by birth.”

49. That is, “You should have the fear that if in spite of being a servant of Allah by birth, you adopted the way of living independently of Him, or served another beside Him, you will have to suffer a severe punishment for rebellion and ingratitude. Therefore, you should avoid

every such way of life which earns you the wrath of God.”

50. Both turning to Allah and having fear of His wrath are the acts of the heart. This state of the heart, for its manifestation and stability, inevitably needs a physical act, which may make it known to others in society that so-and-so has really returned to the service of One Allah alone, and which, at the same time, may go on nourishing and developing the state of piety and devotion in one's own self also by means of practical experience and discipline. That is why immediately after giving the Command for a mental change Allah has given the Command for this physical act, *i.e.* establishment of the *Ṣalāt*. As long as an idea is only an idea in the mind of man, it can neither be stable nor enduring. It may fade away or even change. But when he starts practising it, the idea takes root in him and goes on increasing in stability and strength with more and more practice; so much so that when it has become a belief it can neither change nor fade away easily. Considered from this viewpoint, no act can be more effective than the offering of the Prayer regularly five times a day for strengthening piety and fear of God in oneself. The other act, whatever it be, is carried out at intervals, or in different forms on different occasions, but the Prayer is an act, which is performed every few hours in one and the same specific form permanently, in which man has to rehearse over and over again the whole lesson taught him by the Qur'ān about Islam, so that he does not forget it. Furthermore, both the believers and the disbelievers have to know who among the people has given up the way of rebellion and adopted the way of obedience to the Lord. The believers have to know this so that they can form into a community and society and can cooperate with one another in the way of Allah; then as soon as the relationship of any one of them starts showing signs of laxity with respect to the Faith and Islam, this should become known to all of them at once. The disbelievers have to know this so that the dormant nature in them wakens up when they see the people from their own kith and kin turning humbly to their real God over and over again, and till their nature wakes up they continue to be awe-stricken when they see the practical enthusiasm of the obedient servants of God. For these two objectives also the establishment of the Prayer is the most effective means.

Here, it should be noted that the Command for the establishment of the Prayer was given at Makkah at a time when a handful of the Muslims were being severely persecuted by the disbelieving Quraish, and went on being persecuted for another nine years after this. At that time there was no sign of the Islamic government yet in sight. If the offering of the Prayer was meaningless without the Islamic government, as some ignorant people think, or if the establishment of the *Ṣalāt* did

not mean the offering of the Prayer at all but the establishment of *Nizām-i-Rubūbiyat* (order of Providence), as the deniers of *Hadīth* claim, the Qur'ānic injunction at that stage would have been meaningless. The question is: How did the Holy Prophet and the Muslims carry out this Command for nine years after it had been enjoined?

51. This is an allusion to the fact that the real way of life for mankind is the same Way of Nature as elucidated above. This way of life has not evolved from a polytheistic creed to *Tauhid*, as thought by those who invent a philosophy of religion on the basis of speculation. But, contrary to this, all the religions found in the world today have appeared because of the corruption of the original Way of Life. This corruption occurred because different people added their different self-made creeds to the natural realities and created separate sects and everyone became a devotee of the additional thing, which was the basis of the separate sect, and gave up the original Way of Life. Now the only way of attaining true guidance is that one should return to the original Reality which was the basis of the true Faith, and rid oneself of all the later additions and excrescences and their devotees. If he still keeps any kind of contact with them, he will only be harming the true Faith.

52. This is a clear proof of the fact that in the depths of their heart there still exists an evidence of *Tauhid*. Whenever the hopes start crumbling, their hearts cry out from within that the real Ruler of the universe is its Master and His help alone can improve their lot.

53. That is, "They again start presenting offerings before other deities, and claiming that their misfortune has been removed through the help and grace of such and such a saint and shrine."

54. That is "What authority have they got to say that the calamities are not averted by God but by the so-called saint? Does common sense approve of it? Or, is there any Divine Book which says that Allah has delegated His powers to such and such saints, and that they should now be invoked by the people to help them out of difficulties?"

55. In the preceding verse man has been censured for his ignorance, folly and ingratitude. In this verse, he has been censured for puerility and meanness. When a person attains a little wealth and power and respect, and he sees that his business has started flourishing, he forgets that he has been given all this by Allah. He exults at his success and is so puffed up and conceited that he has neither any regard left for Allah nor for the people. But as soon as good luck deserts him, he loses heart and a single stroke of ill-luck so disheartens and frustrates him that he is prepared to do any mean thing, even commit suicide.

56. That is, "The believers can learn how disbelief and *shirk* affect man's morality and what is the impact of belief in Allah on his morals.

The person who sincerely believes in Allah and looks upon Him as the Master of the treasure-houses of provisions, can never be involved in meanness, in which those forgetful of God are involved. If he is given abundantly he will not be puffed up; he will rather be grateful to Allah, will treat his fellowmen generously and benevolently, and will expend his God-given wealth for His sake. On the other hand, he will exercise patience; he will never gamble away his honesty and self-respect, but will have hope of Allah's bounty till the last. Such a moral excellence can neither fall to the lot of an atheist nor of a polytheist."

57. It has not been said: "Give charity to the relative, the needy and the wayfarer, but their due because this is their right (due to them from you), which you must give them in any case. You will not do them any favour if you part with a part of your wealth for their sake. You should remember it well that if the real owner of the wealth has given you more than others, your extra wealth is, in fact, the right of others, which has been given to you for your trial so that your Lord may see whether you recognize the rights of others and render their rights to them or not."

Anyone who reflects over this Divine Command and its real spirit cannot help feeling that the way proposed by the Qur'ān for man's moral and spiritual development inevitably envisages the existence of a free society and economy. This development is not possible in a social environment in which the people's rights of ownership are set aside and stifled. The system in which the state assumes ownership of all resources and the government machinery the entire responsibility of distributing provisions among the people, so much so that neither can an individual recognize the right of the other and render it, nor a person develop a feeling of goodwill for the other after he has received help, is a purely communist system. Such an economic and social system, which is being advocated in our country today under the deceptive name of the "Qur'ānic Order of Providence" (*Nizām-i Rubābiyat*), is entirely opposed to the Qur'ānic scheme itself, for it suppresses the development of individual morality and formation of character altogether. The Qur'ānic scheme can operate and function only in a society where the individuals own some resources of wealth, possess rights to expend it freely, and then render willingly and sincerely the rights of God and His servants. In such a society alone there can arise the possibility that, on the one hand, the people may develop individually the virtues of sympathy, kindness and affection, sacrifice, recognition of the rights of others and rendering those rights in the right spirit, and on the other, the beneficiaries may develop in their hearts pure feelings of well-wishing, gratitude and thankfulness for the donors. This system only can produce the ideal conditions in

which the elimination of evil and the promotion of goodness does not depend on the intervention of a law-enforcing authority but the people's own purity of the self and their own good intentions take up this responsibility.

58. This does not mean that true success can be attained just by rendering the rights of the needy and the wayfarer and the relative and nothing else is needed to be done for this. But it means that those who do not recognize these rights of others nor render them, will not attain true success. It will be attained by those who render the rights sincerely only for the sake of Allah's goodwill and pleasure.

59. This is the first verse revealed in the Qur'ān that condemned interest. It only says this: "You pay interest thinking that it will cause an increase in the wealth of the money-lender. But actually, in the sight of Allah, interest does not increase the wealth, but the wealth is increased by the payment of the *Zukāt*". Afterwards when the Commandment prohibiting interest was sent down at Madīnah, it was said: "Allah deprives interest of all blessing and develops charity." (For the later Commands, see *Āl-i-'Imrān*: 130, and *Al-Baqarah*: 275 to 281).

This verse has been given two interpretations by the commentators. One section of them says: Here *ribā*, does not mean the interest which is forbidden by the *Shari'ah*, but it means the gift or the present which is given with the intention that the recipient will return it redoubled, or will perform some useful service for the donor, or his becoming prosperous will be beneficial for the donor himself. This is the view of Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Dahhāk, Qatādah, 'Ikrimah, Muḥammad bin Ka'b al-Qurzi and Sha'bī. Probably this comment has been made by these scholars for the reason that in this verse the only consequence mentioned of the act is that in the sight of Allah such wealth will not increase at all; if, however, it had meant the interest forbidden by the *Shari'ah*, it would have been positively said that it will be severely punished by Allah.

The other group differs from this and says that it means the same well known *ribā*' which has been forbidden by the *Shari'ah*. This is the opinion of Ḥasan Baṣrī and Suddī, and 'Allāma Ālūsī also has opined that the apparent meaning of the verse is the same, for *ribā*' in Arabic is used in the same meaning. This interpretation has been adopted by the commentator Nisābūr also.

In our opinion also this second interpretation is correct, for the argument given in favour of the first interpretation is not enough for discarding the well known meaning of the word *ribā*.' In the period when *Sūrah Ar-Rūm* was sent down, interest had not been forbidden yet. The prohibition was made several years afterwards. The way of the Qur'ān is that it first prepares the minds for the thing that it has to prohibit at a

later stage. About wine also the only thing said in the beginning was that it is not pure food. (An-Nahl : 67). Then in Al-Baqarah : 219, it was said that the harm of its sin is greater than its benefit. Then it was enjoined that the Prayer should not be offered in the state of intoxication. (An-Nisā' : 43). Then, finally, it was prohibited totally. Similarly, about interest here it has been only said that it does not increase the wealth, but the real increase is caused by the *Zakāt*. After this, the compound interest was forbidden (Āl-i-'Imrān : 130); and finally, interest itself was made absolutely unlawful. (Al-Baqarah : 275).

60. There is no limit to this increase. The greater the sincerity of intention, the deeper the sense of sacrifice, the greater the intensity of desire for Allah's pleasure with which a person spends his wealth in His way, the greater and more handsome will be the rewards that Allah will give him. According to an authentic *ḥadīth*, even if a person gives a fig in the way of Allah, Allah will increase it to the size of Mount Uhud.

61. From here again the discourse turns to the theme of *Tawḥīd* and the Hereafter for the admonition of the disbelievers and the *mushriks*.

62. That is, "He provided all the various means in the earth for your sustenance and made such arrangements that everyone should receive something from the circulation of the provision."

63. That is, "If those whom you have set up as deities can neither create, nor provide sustenance, nor have power over life and death, nor can raise you back to life after death, then what for have you set them up as your deities?"

64. This is again an allusion to the war that was going on between Byzantium and Iran, which was telling on the whole of the Middle East. "Man's own doings" means the wickedness and oppression and tyranny, which inevitably appear in human conduct and character as a result of adopting *shirk* and atheism and ignoring the Hereafter. "Maybe they mend their ways" means that Allah shows the evil consequences of some of the acts of men in this world before the punishment of the Hereafter so that they understand the reality, feel the error of their conjectures and turn to the righteous belief, which the Prophets of Allah have been presenting before man since the earliest times, and besides adopting which there is no other way of ordering human conduct on sound foundations. This subject has been presented at several places in the Qur'ān, e.g. in At-Taubah : 126, Ar-Ra'd : 31, As-Sajdah : 21, Aṭ-Ṭūr : 47.

65. That is, "The disastrous war between Byzantium and Iran is not a new thing of its kind. The past history of mankind is full of the accounts of the destruction of great nations. The root cause of the evils that caused the destruction of those nations was *shirk* which you are

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وَلَا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
 إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ الرِّيَّاحَ مُبَشِّرَاتٍ وَلِيَذِيقَكُمْ
 مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾
 وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاَنْتَقَمْنَا
 مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا ۚ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ
 الرِّيَّاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَيَجْعَلُهُ كِسْفًا
 فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ ۚ فَإِذَا أَصَابَ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ إِذَا
 هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ قَبْلِهِ
 لُمُبَلِّسِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَنْظِرْ إِلَى آخِرِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ
 إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ حِكْمِ الْمَوْتَى ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا
 فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَظَلُّوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَإِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا
 تَسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادٍ الْعَنِيِّ عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ
 إِنْ تَسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ
 ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَ
 شَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ ﴿٦١﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ
 الْمُجْرِمُونَ ۚ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ ۚ كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ
 أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ ۚ فَهَذَا
 يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ ۚ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
 مَعِدَتُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ

The one who has disbelieved, will bear the burden of his disbelief,⁶⁷ and those who have acted righteously, are indeed preparing the way for their own true success, so that Allah may reward with His bounty those who believed and did good works. Surely He does not like the disbelievers. 44-45

Of His Signs is this that He sends the winds to give good news⁶⁸ and to bless you with His Mercy and to make the ships sail by His Command,⁶⁹ so that you may seek His bounty⁷⁰ and be grateful to Him. And We sent before you Messengers to their peoples who came to them with clear Signs.⁷¹ Then We took vengeance on the guilty ones⁷² and it was their right on Us that We should help the believers. 46-47

It is Allah Who sends the winds, which raise the cloud; then He spreads the clouds in the sky as He pleases, and breaks them up; and then you see drops of rainwater falling from the cloud. When He showers this rain upon those of His servants He pleases, they are filled with joy, though before its coming they had lost all hope. Just see the Signs of Allah's Mercy, how He brings back to life the dead earth.⁷³ Likewise, He will bring back the dead to life: He has power over everything. And if We send a wind due to which they see their crops turn yellow,⁷⁴ they do become even more firm in their disbelief.⁷⁵ (O Prophet,) you cannot make the dead hear you,⁷⁶ nor can you make the deaf to hear your call, when they show their backs and turn away;⁷⁷ nor can you take the blind out of their deviation and guide them aright.⁷⁸ You can only make those people to hear you, who believe in Our Revelations and bow down in submission. 48-53

Allah it is Who originated your creation from a state of weakness; then He gave you strength after that weakness; then made you weak and old after that strength. He creates whatever He wills:⁷⁹ He knows everything and has power over everything. And when the Hour is established,⁸⁰ the criminals will swear that they had not stayed for more than an hour;⁸¹ thus they used to be deceived in their worldly life.⁸² 54-57

But those who had been given knowledge and faith, will say, "You have stayed, according to the book of Allah, till the Day of Resurrection: so this is the same Day of Resurrection, but you did not know." So, on that Day, the excuse of the wicked will not avail them anything, nor will they be asked to seek forgiveness.⁸³

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today being admonished to avoid."

66. That is, "The Day which neither Allah Himself will avert nor has He given power to anyone else to avert it."

67. This is a comprehensive sentence which encompasses all those harms which can afflict a disbeliever on account of his disbelief. No list of the harms could be so comprehensive as this.

68. That is, to give good news of the rain.

69. This refers to winds, which are helpful in sailing. In ancient times, sailing boats and ships mostly depended on favourable winds and adverse winds were disastrous for them. Therefore, the mention of these winds after the rain-bringing winds has been made as a special favour of Allah.

70. "To seek His bounty": To perform trade journeys.

71. That is, "One kind of the Signs are those which are scattered in the world around man, which he comes across at every moment of his life, one of which is the system of the circulation of winds, as mentioned in the preceding verse. The other kind of the Signs are those which the Prophets of Allah brought in the form of the miracles and Divine Revelations and the extraordinary pure characters and their healthy and life-giving influence on human society. Both kinds of the Signs point to the same Reality, which is this: The *Tauhīd* which the Prophets teach is based on the Truth. Each of these Signs supports the other. The Signs of the universe testify to the truth of what the Prophets say, and the Signs brought by the Prophets explain the reality being pointed out by the Signs of the universe.

72. "The guilty ones": those who remained blind to these two kinds of the Signs and persisted in their denial of *Tauhīd* and their rebellion against God.

73. There is a subtle allusion in the mention of the Prophethood and the rain, one after the other, to the reality that the advent of a Prophet is a blessing for man's moral life even as the coming of the rain proves to be a blessing for his material life. Just as the dead earth awakens to life by

a shower of the rain from the sky and starts blooming and swelling with vegetation, so is the morally and spiritually desolate human world quickened to life at the coming down of Divine Revelation and starts blossoming with moral excellences and virtues. This is the disbelievers' own misfortune that they show ingratitude, and regard the blessing of Prophethood as a portent of death for themselves instead of a good news of life.

74. That is, a frosty wind or a heat wave which ruins their crops after they started flourishing by the shower of rain.

75. That is, they start cursing God and blaming Him for all their misfortunes and troubles, whereas when God had showered His blessings on them, they had shown ingratitude instead of being grateful to Him. Here again there is a subtle allusion to the theme that when the Messengers of Allah bring the messages of Mercy to the people, they do not listen to them and reject the blessing; then when God imposes tyrants and despots upon them in consequence of their disbelief, who persecute them severely, and destroy their humanity, the same people start abusing and blaming God for creating a world full of tyranny and cruelty.

76. That is, those whose consciences have become dead, whose moral selves have become devoid of life, whose self-worship and stubbornness and obstinacy have destroyed their capacity to understand and accept the Truth.

77. "The deaf": those who have put locks on their minds and hearts so that they do not understand anything although they hear everything; then, when such people also try that the message of the Truth should not at all enter their ears, and they should avoid and keep away from the inviter, nobody can make them hear and understand anything.

78. That is, "It is not for the Prophet that he should help and guide the blind by the hand to the the right way all through the life. He can only show guidance to the right path. But guiding those whose mind's eyes have been blinded and who do not at all see the way that the Prophet tries to show them, is not within the power of the Prophets."

79. That is, "The states of childhood and youth and old age have all been created by Him. It is dependent upon His will that He may create whomever He pleases weak and whomever He pleases strong; He may give death to whomever He pleases before attaining manhood and whomever He pleases in the prime of youth; He may grant a long life and yet keep in sound health whomever He pleases and bring to a wretched, agonising old age after a brimful youth whomever He likes. Man may live in self-conceit and arrogance if he so likes, but he is so

مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا
 مُبْطِلُونَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ فَاصْبِرْ
 إِنْ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَلَا يَسْتَخِفُّكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوقِنُونَ ۗ

58-60

We have set forth in this Qur'ān every sort of argument to make the people understand, but whatever Sign you may bring, the disbelievers will certainly say, "You are following falsehood." Thus Allah seals the hearts of those who lack knowledge. So, (O Prophet,) have patience: surely Allah's promise is true;⁸⁴ and let not those who lack (certainty of) faith find you light.⁸⁵

helpless in God's powerful grip that he cannot change by any artifice the state that He may place him in.

80. That is, Resurrection, which is being foretold here.

81. That is, from the time of death till Resurrection. Even if thousands of years might have elapsed since their death, they will feel that they had gone to sleep a few hours earlier and then a sudden calamity had roused them from sleep.

82. That is, "They used to make similar wrong estimates in the world, too. There also they lacked the realization of Reality, and therefore, used to assert that there was going to be no Resurrection, no life-after-death, and no accountability before God."

83. Another translation can be: "... nor it will be required of them to please their Lord", because they will have lost all opportunity for recourse to repentance and Faith and righteous acts, and wasted the time allotted for the test and reached the eve of the announcement of the result.

84. The allusion is to the promise made in verse 47 above. There, Allah has mentioned His way of taking vengeance on those criminals who denied and resisted and ridiculed the clear Signs brought by the Messengers of Allah stubbornly, and of helping the believers.

85. That is, "Let not the enemies find you so weak as to suppress you by their uproar, nor to cow you by their campaign of slander-mongering, nor to dishearten you by their jesting, taunts and derision, nor frighten you by their threats, show of power and presecution, nor allure you by offering baits, nor make you effect a compromise with them on

the basis of their appeals in the name of national interests. Instead of this, they should find you so sagacious in the awareness of your objective, so firm in faith and conviction, so resolute in determination, and so strong in character that they should neither be able to cow you by threats, nor purchase you, nor lure you away by temptation, nor strike any bargain with you in the matter of the Faith. This whole theme has been compressed in a short sentence by Allah, saying: "Let not those who lack faith find you light." Now this is borne out by the firm evidence of history that the Holy Prophet proved to be as invincible and indomitable as Allah wanted His Last Prophet to be. Anyone who tried his strength with him in any field and sphere was routed, and eventually the Holy Prophet succeeded in bringing about the desired revolution in spite of every kind of opposition and resistance put up by the whole of polytheistic and unbelieving Arabia.